

Sight & Sound

THE INTERNATIONAL FILM MAGAZINE

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bows out with 'The Turin Horse'

COLONEL BLIMP

the early life of a British classic

KEN LOACH

returns with 'The Angels' Share'

SPRING AWAKENING

cinema after the Arab Spring

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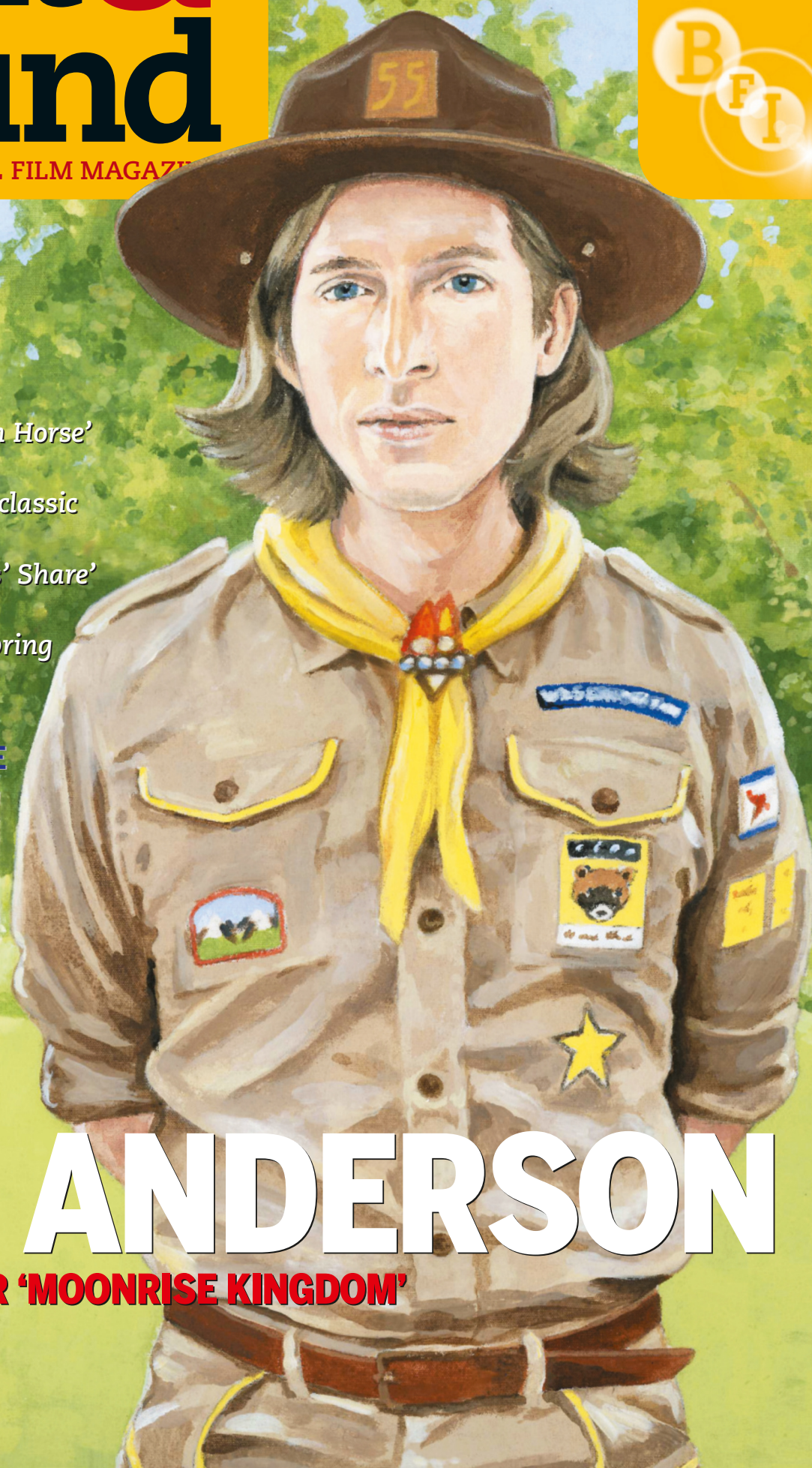
the dizzying 'Faust'

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on Buñuel and more

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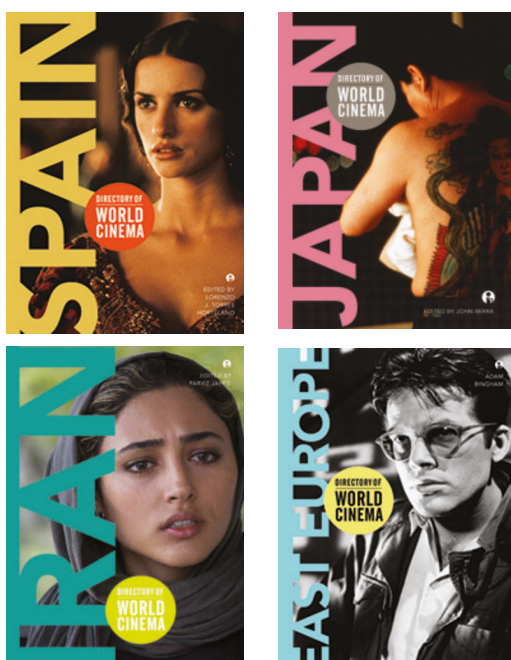


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COVER

Illustration of Wes Anderson by Josie Jammet

Next issue
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Welcome. What every good director needs above all is a writer. Powell needed Pressburger (far left, and p.22) to such an extent that their roles were blurred in their unique joint credit. And even a director with as instantly recognisable a style as this month's cover star Wes Anderson (left, and p.16) has depended on a series of regular writing collaborators who are notable in their own right: Owen Wilson, Noah Baumbach and lately Roman Coppola. Ken Loach, meanwhile, has now made ten films with Paul Laverty (p.44) in Britain's greatest alliterative partnership since the days of P&P. Two grand old men of French cinema – Bertrand Tavernier (p.32) and Jean-Claude Carrière (p.40) – cast light on collaboration from opposite sides of the divide. And what would that arthouse auteur *par excellence* Béla Tarr (p.34) be without the great Hungarian novelist László Krasznahorkai? A horse without a cart. **♥ Nick James**

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NICK JAMES KIND OF BLUEPRINTS



As most readers will know, we're in the middle of striving – as we do once every ten years – to determine the Greatest Films of All Time through two separate polls, one of the world's critics, programmers and curators, the other of

the world's film directors. Anyone hoping to find a few hints in this issue about how those polls are progressing will, of course, be disappointed. (The results will be published in our September issue.) But we do have a pithy prognosis of the pitfalls of the process from Michael Atkinson (p.28) and thoughts about the general cultural-list craze from Nick Roddick (p.15) – neither of whom is privy to how the votes are going. So instead of building the suspense here, let me focus instead on an aspect that's missing from the whole Greatest Film process: the screenwriter and the screenplay.

It was only a printout of a PDF, but when I held a colour copy recently of Emeric Pressburger's handwritten treatment for *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (see p.22), I was both thrilled and chastened. For someone like myself, who writes nearly everything on a laptop and whose handwriting has been slowly deteriorating for years, it feels hypocritical to be so seduced by the ghost of authenticity such a document represents. But just the way the letters curl in deft pencil across the blue lines of the yellowing paper seems to say so much about the jauntiness, craftsmanship and elegance of Pressburger and The Archers in general.

I am on leave as I write this and have just heard that the actual tapestry used in the credits of Powell and Pressburger's film is sitting in my office waiting to be photographed. I can't tell you how much this news has blunted the pleasure of my break – for the tapestry will be back with its owner, Pressburger's grandson Kevin Macdonald, before I return. Yet for a writer of any description, it's the artefacts created in pursuit of one's own craft that are most special, and so I remain a suitable case for the Treatment.

It so happens that this issue of *S&S* has screenwriting on its mind. As well as the Pressburger document, we have an interview with Buñuel's great partner in craft Jean-Claude Carrière (p.40), and another with Paul Laverty (p.44), who in one of the most enduring collaborations in modern British cinema has now written ten features for Ken Loach. Elsewhere, the great French director Bertrand Tavernier describes his work on 1980's *Death Watch* (p.32) with the late and comparatively unsung American screenwriter David Rayfiel (*Three Days of the Condor*), a master of the voiceover.

If there is any magic about the process of putting

together an issue of *S&S*, it's in the way that themes emerge through happenstance. But this month's focus on screenwriting also serves to show up our customary over-reliance on the director as auteur. And what better symbol of the plight of the neglected screenwriter could there be than the treatment? Its primary function is to outline the plot of the film. No matter how much panache you put into this episodic, prosaic document's appearance – even Pressburger's engaging arabesque scrawl – it makes the ephemerality of the screenwriter's craft into a palpable fact.

Carrière, in a remark that didn't make the published cut of my interview with him, uses a somewhat corny but effective image to describe the fate of the screenplay: "It is like the chrysalis for the butterfly to come out of. When the butterfly comes out, it falls to the ground." In other words, only the film really matters, not what was written to describe it beforehand. It's like a vanishing act in reverse: now you don't see it, now you do. If we follow Carrière's dictum through, we realise the obvious: it's not

Only the film really matters, not what was written to describe it beforehand. It's like a vanishing act in reverse: now you don't see it, now you do

screenplays that best show off the screenwriters' art, but the films created from those blueprints.

Let's take it as read, then, that directors, actors and others alter and add to the script as it goes along – and that the true auteur director is also often the main writer. If we use the Top Ten Greatest Films in our 2002 critics' poll as a guide, we can still do an experiment and honour their writers or co-writers: Adolph Green and Betty Comden (*Singin' in the Rain*), Ennio Flaiano (8'), Carl Mayer (*Sunrise*), Nina Agadzhanova (*Battleship Potemkin*), Arthur C. Clarke (2001), Noda Kôgo (*Tokyo Story*), Mario Puzo (*The Godfather*, *The Godfather II*), Carl Koch (*La Règle du jeu*), Alec Coppel and Samuel A. Taylor (*Vertigo*), and Herman J. Mankiewicz (*Citizen Kane*).

Pauline Kael, of course, championed Mankiewicz (however unfairly) as the true author of *Kane*. Clarke and Puzo also wrote the literary sources for their films. In the context of authorship, though, the others – however we might wish otherwise – look contingent. And that's probably because, unlike the auteur, the screenwriter is often the most collaborative person on a film. So let me say now, in recompense, that next year, after the Greatest Films polls are done and dusted, *S&S* will do something substantial about screenwriting and screenwriters.



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Rushes

News, opinion, festivals and coming events

THE BIGGER PICTURE



Love on the run

Jean Gabin has acquired a reputation as the ultimate fatalistic, rebellious hero – the ordinary man driven by forces beyond his control into crime, violence, or the arms of a woman. He exudes a combination of streetwise self-sufficiency and poetic soul that makes him something of a Gallic precursor to 'Out of the Past'-era Robert Mitchum. He made his name in the 1930s working with directors including

Julien Duvivier, Jean Renoir and Marcel Carné on such classics as 'Pépé le Moko', 'Les Bas-fonds' and 'Le Jour se lève'. All of those and more play in this month's BFI Southbank retrospective, which includes an extended run of Carné's moody 1938 thriller 'Le Quai des brumes' (above and right), in which Gabin plays a deserter on the run who finds amour fou in foggy, crime-ridden Le Havre, 70 years before Aki Kaurismäki paid the town a visit.



PHOTOGRAPHS: POSTERS AND DESIGNS (OJCORAL COLLECTION ©)

Tangerine dreams

Artist Yto Barrada (right) tells Ian Francis about her double life in a Tangerine cinema

Although it may still be lodged in the West's cultural imagination as a smugglers' playground, a refuge for degenerates and poets, Tangerine is almost unrecognisable from the 'Interzone' era of Burroughs and Bowles. "In a way, Tangerine doesn't exist," says artist Yto Barrada. "It's a changing idea as much as a city." Having grown up in the city and then returned some years later, Barrada's work tends to focus on these changes: from photography series 'The Strait Project', showing how a culture of migration is etched in the cityscape, to her 2009 film *Beau Geste*, in which a group of men use concrete to reinforce the roots of a tree in a futile attempt to prevent a patch of land from being redeveloped.

Though there's a dispassionate, documentary stance to this work, Barrada herself is rarely content just to observe. When the art deco Cinema Rif, overlooking the city's Grand Socco square, was threatened with demolition a few years ago, she led a group that took over the lease and transformed it into the Cinémathèque de Tanger. It now presents a large and varied programme of screenings and workshops through the year, as well as accommodating festivals and an archive of North African cinema.

With an exhibition of her work opening at the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham (a city which is itself no stranger to knocking things down and starting again), Barrada spoke to me via Skype from the Cinémathèque's lively café.

Ian Francis: To run a cinema and practise as an artist seems like quite a juggling act. Do you find the two roles feed off each other?

Yto Barrada: There was a conflict in the beginning, because of the time that the construction and renovation side took up. Now I can say that they feed each other. Grass-roots non-profit [organisations] like ours are popping up across the region, because the state has left culture orphaned, and artists are among the people who feel a responsibility there.

IF: The archive is obviously central to the Cinémathèque's work, and reflects your own interest in Morocco's past. Do you feel there's a mission to fill in some of the gaps in film history nationally?

YB: Yes, there was a public-service ambition from the beginning, starting with the building – making sure it didn't disappear. There was



'Locally, I'm nobody. I have this secret double identity. But this has more to do with being a female than being an artist'

a worry that projects in Tangerine would be turned towards exclusive tourist needs, and at the same time when they're renovating, that's when a lot of things are thrown away. The collection started with found materials, deposits from artists, fellow filmmakers from around the country. Now we have a digital archive of over a thousand films, artists' videos and documentaries, and it's growing.

IF: You programme a very varied selection of world cinema. Is it difficult getting prints in Morocco?

YB: The biggest difficulty we have is getting hold of prints with the languages we want. We can bring prints from Europe, but then we have to pay insurance and get diplomatic clearance. It takes three months to get one film, and then Customs block it. If you're a non-profit [organisation], you have zero power. The only power we have is we're an organised team – we're just bullies! We send faxes, and then after a fax we send chocolates and then flowers, and then we call, and then we stand in their office until we get what we want!

IF: Presumably your international profile gives you some power, though.

YB: Locally, I'm nobody. I have this sort of secret double identity. The governor, every time I have a meeting with him to get something unblocked – because that's mainly what I do: something's stuck somewhere and I have to go and get it unblocked – he always says the same thing: "You know this kid, she's really well known outside [Morocco]." I'm 40 years old, and it's still the same story! But this has more to do with

being a female than being an artist.

IF: In your recent film 'Hand-Me-Downs' I enjoyed the contrast between the sunny colonialist cine-film and the gruesome tales in the voiceover. They're presented as part of your own family history. How many of them are actually rooted in fact?

YB: What is fact, when it comes to family stories? The idea was never to check. My mother and my aunt, when viewing the film, didn't even pay any attention to the fact that the images were not theirs. They just said, "You're totally wrong: that soup wasn't green it was yellow" – that kind of thing.

Hand-Me-Downs is a good example of how my work and the Cinémathèque meet. We had a letter from Cinémémoire, this French archive which collects amateur and propaganda films, and when I looked at these home movies I just felt I had to do something with them.

IF: As part of your show at Ikon, a canal boat will be operating as a screening space and café. Is the social dimension of filmgoing important to you?

YB: Perhaps the biggest unanticipated dimension of the Cinémathèque was the social one, in our café and library. It's very important, because social mixing doesn't happen much here. Cafés are mainly for men here, so ours is a shelter, a place of exchange. Lots of projects are born here.

■ Yto Barrada's first UK solo exhibition takes place at the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham from 16 May to 8 July

● **Anchorman** (below) – the hit 2004 Will Ferrell vehicle about 1970s San Diego newsman Ron Burgundy, which has become something of a touchstone for US comedy since – is to get the sequel treatment. Will Ferrell, in his Ron Burgundy, jazz-flute get-up, announced the project on the Conan O'Brien show in March. Where the first film played on the upset caused in sexist 70s TV news offices by the arrival of co-anchor Veronica Corningstone, the sequel will reportedly tackle the coming of 24-hour news cycles and 'increased diversity'.

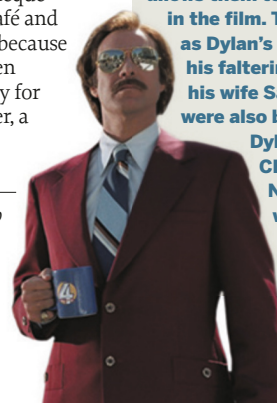
● **Pablo Larrain**, the Chilean director, is to examine his country's recent history once again with *'No'*, about the 1988 plebiscite that finally brought an end to Pinochet's rule. Set to star Gael García Bernal, the film could be considered the third in the director's loose trilogy covering the Pinochet years: *'Post Mortem'* was set in 1973, during the dictator's takeover, and *'Tony Manero'* in the midst of his rule.

● **Spike Jonze** – having spent the three years since *'Where the Wild Things Are'* making shorts, helping out on *'Jackass 3'* and taking a cameo in *'Moneyball'* – is to return with an as-yet-untitled project about a man who falls in love with a computer's voice (though that plot description is most likely a red herring, or only hints at the full story). The cast includes Rooney Mara, Joaquin Phoenix, Amy Adams and Samantha Morton.

● **Peter Jackson** unveiled ten minutes of footage from his upcoming adaptation of *'The Hobbit'* at last month's CinemaCon conference in Las Vegas. Opinions were reportedly mixed on the benefits of Jackson's decision to shoot the film at the higher 48 frames-per-second format, with some in the audience describing the format as giving a 'TV sports' look.

● **Bob Dylan's** 1975 album *'Blood on the Tracks'* is to be 'adapted' into a film by Brazilian producers Rodrigo Teixeira and Fernando Loureiro, who have reportedly bought the rights in a deal that allows them to use Dylan's songs in the film. Though long seen as Dylan's commentary on his faltering marriage to his wife Sara, the songs were also based, according to

Dylan, on a number of Chekhov's stories. No word yet on who will play Lily, Rosemary or the Jack of Hearts.



Vulgarity in Hong Kong

Tony Rayns experiences an epiphany of sorts at this year's Hong Kong International Film Festival

Before the British government handed Hong Kong back to China in 1997, there was much speculation about the territory's future under Deng Xiaoping's "one country, two systems" edict. The wealthy middle class fled overseas – Canada and Australia, mostly – to get 'real' passports, but the majority who couldn't afford to emigrate made do with the thought that a rapidly changing China was becoming more like Hong Kong by the day, which suggested that they had little to fear from Beijing.

No-one predicted what has actually happened, which is that Hong Kong has reinvented itself as a massive shopping mall for wealthy tourists from the Mainland. This has kept the economy buoyant and the property bubble well inflated, but it has also turned what was once East Asia's most user-friendly city into a high-stress place in which the everyday interests of the many are routinely sacrificed to the power-broking of the few. In other words, Hong Kong has become more like a Mainland city



Flashes in the pan: Pang Ho-Cheung's 'Vulgaria'

than vice versa. The native Cantonese dialect is often displaced on the streets by *putonghua* (Mandarin), as spoken in China.

Tied up in these changes, the Hong Kong film industry has moved north; virtually all its 'name' directors are now working in Beijing or Shanghai, chasing the Mainland's huge mass audience. This has left the Hong Kong International Film Festival, now in its 36th year, with little home-grown cinema to champion; for years it has clutched at straws, such as Johnnie To and a posse of young indie filmmakers. And yet the HKIFF has several times found itself cutting

to the quick of Hong Kong's fraught relationship with the 'motherland', and that's what happened this year at the riotous premiere of *Vulgaria* (*Dai Chuk Hei Kak*), a committedly vulgar new comedy from indie maverick Pang Ho-Cheung.

Previously best known for black comedies and cynical relationship movies (*Isabella*, *Dream Home*), Pang had already opened the festival with another new feature, *Love in the Buff* (*Chun-Kiu yu Chi-Ming*), about Hong Kong ex-lovers struggling to cope with jobs in Beijing. That proved mildly amusing and touching, but *Vulgaria* is something else again. It's

about a desperate Hong Kong filmmaker (played by the admirable Chapman To) who accepts money from a seriously uncouth gangster in Guangxi to make a sex movie – but has to meet two conditions. One is that it has to star Yum-Yum Shaw, a starlet in soft-porn films of the 1970s (the gangster remembers her fondly) who has grown old disgracefully and is now Hong Kong's answer to Mae West; these days known as Susan Shaw, she's a delight. The other condition is that it must feature the gangster's mistress – who turns out to be a mule.

Pang told me that the no-budget film was made in 12 days and largely written as they went along, which makes the welter of inventive bestiality gags, condom gags and film-industry-scumbag gags all the more impressive. Not as impressive, though, as the soundtrack, which features the filthiest Cantonese slang in any movie ever, leaving Raymond Phatanavirangoon's heroic English subtitles racing to keep up. The packed house at the premiere (in the Cultural Centre!) went ape-shit, creased up by the gags, amazed by the non-stop obscenity and ecstatic at the defiant Cantoneseness of it all. It may be too culture-specific to travel far, but *Vulgaria* is a minor classic.

THE NUMBERS

Picking up speed

Charles Gant sees arthouse auteurs exceed their personal best at the box office

It's hard to say which is more surprising: the Dardenne brothers smashing their previous best UK box office with an audience pleaser that has triggered a portion of lofty critical disdain; or Nuri Bilge Ceylan likewise achieving a career best with a film that has had critics swooning, but is nevertheless a tough watch. The concurrent success of *The Kid with a Bike* and *Once upon a Time in Anatolia*, which both shared the Grand Prix du Jury at Cannes a year ago, proves there's no single formula for success.

At distributor New Wave, joint topper Robert Beeson is certain of the reason for *Anatolia*'s stellar takings: "It was the critics what won it," he says. A quote-heavy press advert banged home the message that this was an important, unmissable film, with

endorsements that variously used the term "master", "masterly" and "masterpiece". An attractive marketing image, featuring a woman in traditional costume looking out over a tree-lined landscape, is taken from a Ceylan photo book and doesn't actually appear in the film.

Over at Artificial Eye, distribution boss Ben Luxford was conscious of offering a sunny antidote with *The Kid with a Bike*. "The arthouse market has been pretty dark," he points out. "Audiences have been through quite an amount of despair recently, and we're certainly guilty of supplying a lot of it, with *Melancholia*, *Deep Blue Sea*, *Wuthering Heights* and *Kevin*, as well as *Tyrannosaur* and *Kill List* [from StudioCanal]. There hasn't been a lot for people to cheer about."

A bullish release of the Dardenne's film on 31 screens was to some extent a quirk of the market: Werner Herzog's *Into the Abyss* was coming a week later, and many sites had a gap.

"We were filler, basically, for that week," says Luxford. "We took the decision to take those sites, so that's why we were on – for a Dardenne brothers release – a really aggressive amount of screens." But after opening-weekend takings of over £70,000, the movie was then able to expand into new cinemas.

New Wave also saw its film expand, hitting 26 sites at its widest point. That, explains Beeson, is "the joy of digital. We only had one 35mm print. Doing 26 subtitled two-and-a-half-hour 35mm prints would have cost a fortune."

With a box-office take of £324,000 at time of going to press, *The Kid with a Bike* is racing towards a total close to three times the Dardenne's previous best (see chart). *Once upon a Time in Anatolia*, meanwhile, is clearly set to exceed Ceylan's earlier best effort by at least £100,000. It's a point to ponder that the Turkish director's worst UK performer was *Three*

Dardenne brothers at UK box office

Film	Year	Gross
<i>The Kid with a Bike</i>	2012	£324,217*
<i>Rosetta</i>	2000	£130,605
<i>The Child</i>	2006	£125,455
<i>The Son</i>	2003	£39,716
<i>The Silence of Lorna</i>	2008	£35,420
<i>The Promise</i>	1996	£22,373

*Gross to 22 April

Nuri Bilge Ceylan at UK box office

Film	Year	Gross
<i>Once upon a Time in Anatolia</i>	2012	£246,938*
<i>Uzak</i>	2004	£156,181
<i>Climates</i>	2007	£148,313
<i>Three Monkeys</i>	2009	£82,976

*Gross to 22 April

Monkeys, a relatively accessible thriller, whereas his best is a long, discursive, relatively plotless drama, mostly filmed at night.

Julie
DELPY

★★★★★ Empire
★★★★★ Woman
★★★★★ Marie Claire
★★★★★ Sunday Telegraph

Chris
ROCK

Families. You can't take them anywhere.

2 DAYS IN NEW YORK

A POLARIS production in coproduction with TEMPESTE SOUS UN CRÂNE. SENATOR FILM. SAGA FILM. ALVY PRODUCTIONS. IN PRODUCTION: TOY FILM PRODUCTION. BNP PARIBAS FILM FUND.
In association with PROTOZOA PICTURES. Screenplay by Julie DELPY and Alexis LANGEAU. Story by Julie DELPY, Alexis LANGEAU, Alex NARON. Based on original characters by Julie DELPY.
Director of Photography: Laurent BACHY (A.C.C.). Production Designer: Julia PERE. Costume Designer: Rebecca HERRER. 1st Assistant Director: NINA HAUSMANN. Casting by Suzanne SMITH-CROWLEY
and JESSICA KELLY. Editor: Isabelle DEVINCK. Sound: Joshua ANDERSON. Gert JANSEN. Franco PROCOPO. Producers: Christophe MAZODIER, Scott FRANKLIN, Julie DELPY, Uri ISRAEL, Hubert TONTI.
Jean-Jacques NERIA. Associate producers: Dominique BOUTONNET, Arnaud BERTHOUD, Hubert CAILLARD, Gérard FRYDMAN, Jean-Claude FLEURY, David CLARKENS, Alex VERBAERE.
Executive producers: Nélke SASSÉ, Matthias TREISS, Wendt Sasse REZO.

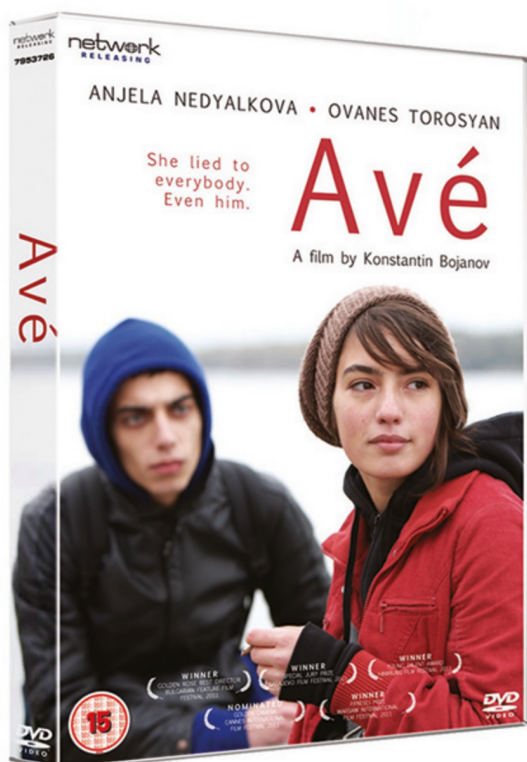
www.facebook.com/2DaysinNY

Directed by **JULIE DELPY**

15 Contains strong sex references and language, some very strong.

IN CINEMAS 18 MAY

ANJELA NEDYALKOVA • OVANES TOROSYAN



Avé

A film by
Konstantin Bojanov

She lied to
everybody.
Even him.

WINNER
GOLDEN ROSE BEST DIRECTOR
BULGARIAN FEATURE FILM
FESTIVAL 2011

WINNER
SPECIAL JURY PRIZE
SARAJEVO FILM FESTIVAL 2011

WINNER
FIPRESCI PRIZE
WARSAW INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL 2011

WINNER
YOUNG TALENT AWARD
HAMBURG FILM FESTIVAL 2011

NOMINATED
GOLDEN CAMERA
CANNES INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL 2011

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Internal exile

Though shot in Germany in 1944, Helmut Käutner's 'Under the Bridges' defiantly avoids any reference to Nazism. By **Philip Kemp**

It's generally assumed that a filmmaker faced with a totalitarian regime like Nazi Germany has – if he plans to continue working – only two options: self-exile (Fritz Lang) or collaboration, however reluctant (G.W. Pabst). But there is a third option, one that might be called internal exile: to stay and carry on making films while avoiding any reference to the regime or its ideology – to act, in fact, as though it didn't exist. Not an easy route, and one that requires some very fancy footwork. But it's the one that was chosen – and followed with some success – by the director Helmut Käutner.

Born in Düsseldorf in 1908, Käutner started out in the theatre – first as an actor and then, with three friends, as a member of a cabaret group who called themselves Die Vier Nachrichten (The Four Reporters). Formed in 1930 in Munich, the group toured all over Germany; it was banned in 1935, not apparently on account of any satirical barbs, but because one of its members was Jewish and another had a Jewish wife. Käutner, who always described himself as apolitical ("Politics in every form I have encountered... has always inspired in me no other feeling than boredom, annoyance or nausea"), turned to writing screenplays, and in 1939 got the chance to direct one of them himself.

A fluffy romantic comedy set during a diplomatic conference in Lugano, *Kitty and the World Conference* (*Kitty und die Weltkonferenz*) was banned in Germany thanks to its favourable portrayal of the urbane British foreign minister – but it was shown in German-occupied Prague. Undeterred, Käutner went on to make eight more features under the Reich. Some of them ran into trouble. *Romance in a Minor Key* (*Romanze in Moll*, 1943), adapted from a story by Maupassant, offered a study of a doomed adulterous love-affair. Described by Georges Sadoul as "the only film of real quality... produced in Germany during the war", its romantic melancholia owed a good deal to Ophuls and Carné, and nothing to the prevailing ideology. Goebbels denounced it as "defeatist".

Port of Freedom (*Die Grosse Freiheit* Nr 7, 1944), Käutner's first film in colour, was an official commission, intended to portray "the art of the



Along for the ride: Anna (Hannelore Schroth) comes between two friends on a barge

German song". What he came up with was a raunchy tale of nautical life in Hamburg, set largely around the city's Reeperbahn red-light district. Admiral Doenitz got Goebbels to ban the film, furious that German sailors should be shown drunken and whoring – and that Käutner had avoided showing swastika-flagged warships by blanketing his harbour scenes in fog.

In the final months of the war Käutner made what's often considered his finest film, *Under the Bridges* (*Unter den Brücken*, 1945). The presiding spirit this time was Jean Vigo, and echoes of *L'Atalante* abound: once again we're on a barge with two men on board, their comfortable, borderline-homoerotic relationship disrupted by the arrival of a woman. Hendrik (Carl Raddatz) and Willi (Gustav Knuth) are the crew and co-owners of the barge Liselotte, being towed up the Havel towards Berlin. They enjoy fleeting liaisons with various women (we see Carl taking leave of one of them, played by Hildegard Knef in an early role), and

The presiding spirit was Jean Vigo. Echoes of 'L'Atalante' abound

debate buying a motor for the barge to free them from the dictates of the tow line. Apart from anything else, this would allow them to stop and chat up the girls who watch them from the bridges they pass under.

Moored near Potsdam one night, they see a woman on a bridge, apparently about to jump. When they accost her, Anna (Hannelore Schroth) denies any suicidal intent, but agrees to spend the night on their barge, since the last bus to Berlin has gone. Next day they offer her a lift to the city. Inevitably, both men fall in love with her; their rivalry threatens to break up their partnership.

It's a simple, even archetypal story, and Käutner films it with a limpid charm that makes the most of his

quiet waterscapes and skies. The title song, jaunty but with a touch of wistfulness, recalls the wartime hit 'Lili Marleen' (whose music was composed by Norbert Schultze, one of Käutner's partners in Die Vier Nachrichten). Neither the humour nor the pathos is overdone, and the details of the bargees' domestic life are filled in with affectionate care. True, *Under the Bridges* is no imaginative masterpiece on a par with *L'Atalante*, but it isn't diminished by the comparison.

What's most remarkable about the film, though, isn't so much what's in it as what isn't. It was shot during the final year of the war in Europe, between May and October 1944, largely on the locations that it depicts, from Havelberg on the North Sea coast up the river and into Berlin itself. The Red Army was advancing through East Prussia, the Allied forces were approaching the Ruhr, and Germany was under almost nightly bombing raids. "Often we had to look for a new location because the old one had been bombed," Käutner recalled. "We spent most of the nights clutching our precious equipment under bridges, not knowing that they had long since been mined."

Yet there's not a mention of the war in the film – not even indirectly. We see no swastikas, no bombed buildings, nobody in uniform. No one makes patriotic speeches or gives Hitler salutes. Berliners are shown sunbathing, or in rowing-boats on lakes. The film implicitly stakes a claim (as Erwin Leiser wrote about Käutner's wartime films as a whole) "for the right to a free life as opposed to the requirements of discipline".

Only once during the war years did Käutner succumb to official pressure. *Till We Meet Again, Franziska!* (*Auf Wiedersehen, Franziska!*, 1941) is about a German war reporter travelling the globe for a news company. Finally he receives his call-up papers. The Propaganda Ministry insisted on a scene being included in which his wife urges him to go and fight for the Fatherland. Käutner shot the scene – but enclosed it within a pair of fades, like inverted commas, so that it could be removed without any damage to continuity or dramatic logic.

After the war Käutner, cleared of any taint of Nazism, continued making films for another 20 years before moving into theatre and television. He was one of the few worthwhile German directors in the decades prior to the New German Cinema. But he never quite regained the creative heights of *Romance in a Minor Key* or *Under the Bridges* – the films he made in internal exile.

What the director said



"'Under the Bridges' is actually my favorite film. Anyone who sees it today would not be able to understand that at the time, when

there was no future any more and Germany's final collapse was a

question of days, it was possible to film such a simple, almost idyllic story... When I really think about it, what we did arose from the filmmakers' stubbornness to allow any of the horror which surrounded us to seep into our work."

Helmut Käutner, quoted in 'German Cinema: Texts in Context', edited by Marc Silberman (Wayne State University Press, 1995)

From Bauhaus to arthouse

As a major exhibition about the Bauhaus opens in London, Ian Christie assesses the German school's influence on – and interface with – the development of cinema

Recently I interviewed Sir Ken Adam, production designer of the early Bond films, *Dr Strangelove* and much else, and asked him what was the biggest inspiration behind his work. Unhesitatingly he answered, “The Bauhaus” – which perhaps conveys just how pervasive the influence of this legendary experimental art school has been. For Adam, discovering the Bauhaus's radical teaching about new materials and forms long after they first appeared in post-World War I Germany was liberating, encouraging him to experiment in the feature films he designed during the 1960s. Yet, paradoxically, film is hardly mentioned in most accounts of the Bauhaus, and there was never a dedicated film workshop among its craft departments.

Launched in Weimar in 1919 by the architect Walter Gropius, and later relocated to Dessau, the Bauhaus rebranded Saxony's old school of arts and crafts as a new institution devoted to combining all the traditional arts in a ‘new architecture’, based on research and shunning unnecessary decoration. ‘Form follows function’ wasn't actually a Bauhaus motto, but it conveys the impact of the stripped-down designs that emerged from the furniture, metal and typography workshops that are perhaps its most recognisable legacy today.

But there were other currents at the Bauhaus too, including Oskar Schlemmer's quasi-mystical performances with masks and geometric costumes, and the



Broad church: the Bauhaus incorporated the differing aesthetics of Walter Gropius, left, and László Moholy-Nagy, right

From our perspective, Moholy-Nagy had clearly seen the future, and indeed would help create it through his teaching

explosive influence of the multi-talented Hungarian László Moholy-Nagy, who started teaching at the Bauhaus in 1923 and immediately began to champion photographic media and industrial techniques. His 1925 book *Painting Photography Film* became a manifesto for a ‘new vision’ that reflected the modern media world. Little wonder that some of his more traditional colleagues, such as the painters Paul Klee and Lyonel Feininger, deplored this “incessant

talk of cinema, optics, mechanics, projection and continuous motion... and even of mechanically produced transparencies that can be stored like gramophone records”.

From our perspective, Moholy-Nagy had clearly seen the future, and indeed would help create it through his teaching and – perhaps most of all, as far as film is concerned – by co-curating a historic programme at the 1929 Stuttgart FiFo (film and photography) exhibition, which

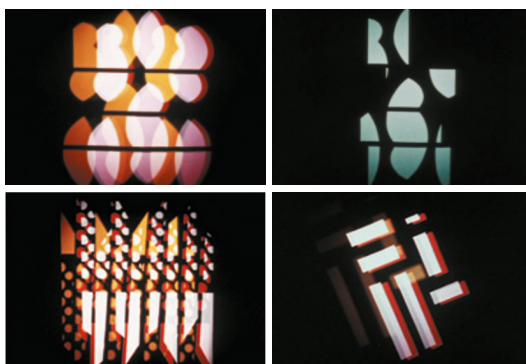
gathered work produced over the previous five years by such disparate figures as Marcel Duchamp, Fernand Léger, René Clair and Walter Ruttmann, together with the lesser-known Guido Seeber and Eugène Deslaw, and the young Dutch filmmaker Joris Ivens.

What, if anything, did these artists have in common? Their abstraction would be termed “absolute film” by the English critic Paul Rotha in his influential 1930 survey *The Film Till Now*, which claimed this as “the purest form of cinema”, beneath which Rotha placed, rather priggishly, the “lower forms of cinema, descending through the epic and art film to the ordinary narrative film and the singing and dancing picture”.

Rotha took his cue from a landmark event organised in Berlin in 1925, which gathered an assortment of recent experimental films under the label ‘absolute’. Key to that programme, as it would be again in 1929, was Léger's 1924 *Ballet mécanique*, the result of an unexpected collaboration between the veteran Cubist painter and a young American cameraman, Dudley Murphy. With its rhythmic patterns of everyday objects, machinery and newspaper headlines, interspersed with three enigmatic live-action passages featuring women – a washerwoman



‘Ballet mécanique’



‘Reflecting Colour-Light-Play’

looped in perpetual ascent of a staircase, a lady on a garden swing, a model's face in close-up cut into sections by a moving vignette – *Ballet mécanique* quickly became a rallying point for artists and filmmakers across Europe who wanted to liberate film from the straitjacket of genre and narrative. Thanks to Léger's reputation, as well as its capacity to attract multiple interpretations, it has remained central to the tradition of artists' films, greatly helped in recent years by the addition of George Antheil's original pounding avant-garde music score, complete with sirens, rattles and engine effects.

Another collaborative film made in Paris in 1924, *Entr'acte*, would also become a lasting inspiration for later avant gardes. Originally conceived by the wealthy painter Francis Picabia as part of a Dada event entitled 'Performance Cancelled' ('Relâche'), it brought together a gallery of the Parisian avant garde ranging from director René Clair to composer Erik Satie (whose haunting score also now regularly accompanies the film) to Duchamp, Man Ray, Picabia and members of the fashionable Ballets Suédois troupe. With its homage to the funfair and a mock funeral that turns into a Keystone-style race through the Paris suburbs, *Entr'acte* celebrates improvisation and clowning in front of the camera – an early precursor of Dick Lester and Peter Sellers's *Running, Jumping and Standing Still Film* (1960), and of course countless music videos.

Let there be light

These more elaborate films were made possible by the technical filmmaking skills that Murphy and Clair already possessed, and they have remained popular. But back at the Bauhaus, with no in-house film instruction available, the main inspiration came from 'light play', a distinctive form of live presentation using mirrors and colour filters pioneered in Weimar in 1922 by Kurt Schwitters, which another student, Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack, showed as 'Reflecting Colour-Light-Play' in Vienna's 1924 Music and Theatre Festival (where *Ballet mécanique* also had its premiere). 'Light play' also drew on a long tradition of interest in exploring the correspondence between colour and music, which had fascinated many, including the Russian composer Alexander Scriabin; early German abstract animation such as Walter Ruttmann's series *Opus I to IV* was clearly inspired by this too.

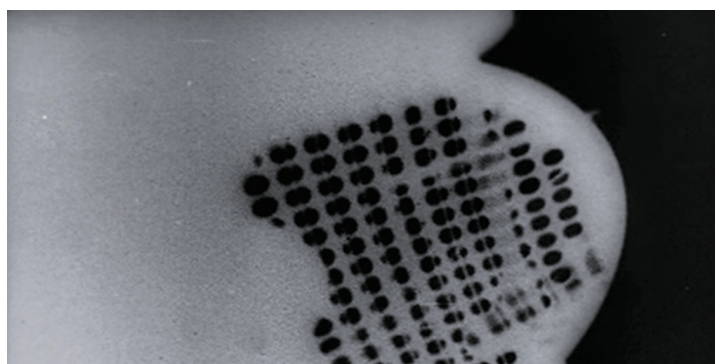
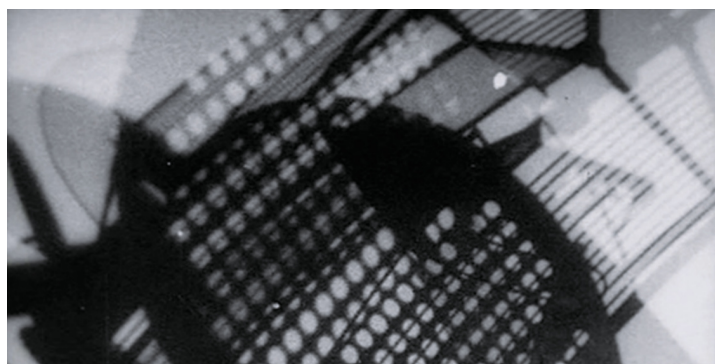
Animation was in fact the main

Bauhaus film genre, whether of simplified geometric imagery – as in Viking Eggeling's austere beautiful *Diagonal Symphony*, completed in 1924 with the help of a Bauhaus student – or of 'photogram' imagery, created by objects placed on light-sensitive material. Hans Richter is probably the best-known figure in this abstract animation tradition, thanks to his pioneering *Rhythmus* films (1921-25). Although Richter was never formally connected with the Bauhaus, the filmmaker and historian Thomas Tode has rescued from neglect inventive work in a similar vein by Bauhaus alumni Heinrich Brocksieper, Werner Graeff and Kurt Kranz.

By the time Moholy-Nagy and Richter organised the 1929 Stuttgart screenings, Moholy-Nagy had resigned from the Bauhaus and was working as a successful independent designer and consultant, first in Berlin, then briefly in Britain, before his final move to the US in 1937. His own work in 'light play' and the moving image centred on a remarkable kinetic sculpture known by various titles before it became the 'Light-Space Modulator' in 1930; this cast complex shadows on its surroundings and also generated an ingenious form of abstract cinema when filmed as *Lightplay Black-White-Grey*. Moholy-Nagy believed passionately in moving beyond traditional artists' techniques, having created a provocative series of 'telephone paintings' in 1922 by phoning instructions to a factory that produced enamel signs. But alas a commissioned contribution in 1935 to Alexander Korda's sci-fi epic *Things to Come*, which might have brought his work to a wider audience, was rejected.

Where Moholy-Nagy succeeded best in communicating the 'new vision' to the public at large was in his extensive advertising work, and if we want to locate the continuing legacy of the Bauhaus, this is undoubtedly where to look. From Guido Seiber's wonderfully entertaining virtuoso montage *KIPHO*, made to advertise a Berlin photography exhibition in 1925, through the modernist advertisements produced under John Grierson's aegis in Britain in the early 1930s, to post-war public-service animation films by the Hungarian-born John Halas, the pervasive influence of the Bauhaus philosophy can be clearly traced.

Film offered both a challenge and a solution to the problems of moving from traditional crafts to modernity –



'Lightplay Black-White-Grey'



'Light-Space Modulator'

a new craft of moving image and sound to be mastered by the artist-artisans of the 20th century, which the Bauhaus first began to train. In the years since, not only designers like Ken Adam but nearly all of us have become unwitting beneficiaries of its design philosophy. So it's a good moment to look back at what the pioneers of Weimar and Dessau actually did.

■ The exhibition 'Bauhaus: Art as Life' is at the Barbican Art Gallery, London, until 12 August. Ian Christie will be in conversation with Thomas Tode, who has collected many of the Bauhaus-related films, on 25 May, and with Hattula Moholy-Nagy (daughter of László) on 26 May, both at the Barbican Cinema, London

© HATTULA MOHOLY-NAGY (3)

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Canonanonanonanon

In deference to one of the doyens of that very British piece of journalistic self-indulgence, the recurring column, I thought I'd experiment with a new beginning. So, with apologies to Simon Hoggart: On Tuesday, to the Hitchcock launch at BFI Southbank. This summer's huge Hitchcock retrospective is clearly *A Good Thing* which will, I'm sure, reveal to many moviegoers a gem or two they've previously missed in Hitch's substantial oeuvre. Even us jaded completists can look forward to the restored silent masterpieces. No problem with that.

But as the presentations, trailers and panel discussions wore on, I found myself reflecting more and more on the concept of Hitchcock's rise to the undisputed status of canonical director – institutionalised, adjectivalised and deemed as worthy of sixth-form study as Shakespeare or Dickens. Not just Hitchcock, either: once you start with canons, it goes on and on. Canonanonanonanon.

At the Hitchcock event, the upcoming *Sight & Sound* poll of the 'Greatest Films of all Time' was also much discussed. Would *Citizen Kane* finally be dethroned? Would *Vertigo* (whose restored version was rereleased in 1996) still come in at no.2, as it did last time? Will the bed-sitter generation have gained enough critical mass this year to get *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994) or *Withnail & I* (1986) onto the list?

All of which explains why, that Tuesday, I was already in the mood for totting up totals, having just chewed many a virtual pencil (sadly, you can't chew a keyboard) to come up with my own contribution to the *S&S* poll. Like those Radio 4 listeners invited to create their own Desert Island Discs, I was already in list mode.

But how did Alfred Joseph Hitchcock from Leytonstone become Hitch, the Master of Suspense, with the signature profile, the classic TV series and its catchy little tune (Gounod's 'Funeral March of a Marionette', if you're interested)? Is 'Master of Suspense' a title you can be awarded, like an honorary degree, or is it a created catchphrase, like 'Does Exactly What It Says on the Tin'? And when does a career become a canon? Was Hitch already the Master of Suspense when he made *Blackmail* (1929)? When he made *Rebecca* (1940)? When he made *North by Northwest* (1959)? *Family Plot* (1976)? Or when CBS needed something to promote their TV programme?

I'm sure there are Hitchcock



I found myself reflecting on the concept of Hitchcock's rise to the status of canonical director – adjectivalised and deemed worthy of sixth-form study

scholars out there who can answer some of those questions – and mock others. But this business of ranking things has been bothering me for years, since long before we were all told we had to put stars at the top of our film reviews. How much longer will it – can it – last?

For starters, judging everything by numbers seems especially endemic to the movie business. Is that because of the tendency to use box-office results as a measure of worth? Just occasionally we may read of the advance bookings for a West End musical. But that's rare. Every week, on the other hand, we are told how much this or that movie took at the American box office. (Or didn't take, in the case of *John Carter*.) It sounds like a good yardstick. But if 100 million Americans can't be wrong, how do you account for the Hershey bar? And is *The Hunger Games* more attractive to audiences in direct proportion to the number of Harry Potter movies it out-grossed in its first week, its first weekend or its first hour on release?

It's not just the studios that like to canonise a flick. Is it, perhaps, the transitoriness of the medium that makes critics rush to judgement with the 'Best Film of the Year' label, even if it's only February? Sometimes this is done with tongue firmly in cheek. In the July 1980 edition of the *Monthly Film Bulletin* (a BFI publication long since engulfed by *S&S*), Richard Combs gleefully hailed Sam Fuller's *The Big Red One* as "the one great film of the eighties". Coming out of the Berlin press screening of *The Million Dollar Hotel* 20 years later, Jonathan

Romney remarked: "That Wim Wenders doesn't hang about: it's only February 2000 and he's already made the worst film of the millennium."

But maybe all this is on the way out. Yes, website algorithms direct you to the most popular (as opposed to the most accurate) answer to your question. But those endless lists that crop up on IMDb – where *Titanic* jostles for pole position with *Forrest Gump* – are also algorithm-controlled, so the same ones never show up twice in a row. In the world of canons, which relies on gradual aggregation and accumulation, that makes them mere grapeshot – idle suggestions we may like to agree or disagree with. We all know that when there are public polls for the best movie of the year, those released in the last three months of the year always do best. But what the web is giving us is a nano-poll: films that were popular in the last three seconds.

When I worked as a trade journalist, a good pre-Cannes space filler was to try to figure out how much a *Palme d'Or* meant at the box office – to which the answer was generally, "bugger all". In retrospect, the point of the exercise (apart from space-filling in those far-off days when print advertising was plentiful) was to bring the Festival du Film into line with the rest of the business.

But as the business shifts towards a system of digital delivery in which lists are constantly being reordered and reinvented, maybe the power of numbers is finally being undermined. Will canons be the next to go? And will the movie world be a better place? ♦♦ Nick Roddick

- **'Jazz on a Summer's Day'**, Bert Stein and Aram Avakian's document of the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival boasting performances from the likes of Thelonious Monk, Chuck Berry, and Mahalia Jackson, is to get a rare UK cinema screening in advance of its release on DVD. Curzon Soho, London, 9 May
- **Open City Docs Fest** opens with a gala preview of Matthew Akers's *'Marina Abramovic: The Artist in Present'*, which follows the artist as she prepares for a major retrospective of her work at MOMA in New York. Among the many strands and events, the UK premieres include Chinese director Xun Yu's *'The Vanishing Spring Light'* and Tunisian Elyes Baccar's *'Rouge Parole'*. Various venues in London, 21-24 June.
- **The LUX/ICA Biennial of Moving Images** is a new event devoted to contemporary artists. Eleven leading curators, including Ben Rivers and Mark Webber, have each selected a programme of screenings, live events and discussions. ICA, London, 24-27 May.
- **Superpower – Africa in Science Fiction** is an exhibition that explores the influence of science fiction ideas on current art and filmmaking in Africa. Arnolfini, Bristol, until 1 July.
- **Made in Britain** is a programme of five very different British classics that will screen across cinemas nationwide, one a week, every Tuesday from 5 June to 3 July. The five films are *'Passport to Pimlico'*, *'The Plague of the Zombies'*, *'The Man Who Fell to Earth'*, *'Hobson's Choice'* and *'Quatermass and the Pit'*. Each has recently been digitally restored.



- **Two Masters of Japanese Cinema: Kaneto Shindo and Kozaburo Yoshimura** is a season exploring the output of two of Japanese cinema's greatest filmmakers, who enjoyed a close friendship and professional collaboration for many years. The season includes such gems as *'Onibaba'*, *'Kuroneko'*, *'Clothes of Deception'*, *'The Naked Island'* and *'The Tattered Banner'*. BFI Southbank, London, June and July.

No filmmaker is an island. But – with more than a little help from his recurring collaborators – Wes Anderson has managed to a rare degree to resist the demands of commercial self-effacement, consistently following the star of his artistic preoccupations from *Bottle Rocket* (1995) onwards.

Criticisms of Anderson's movies, in fact, tend to revolve around the fact that they are too much like Wes Anderson movies. *Moonrise Kingdom*, Anderson's latest – accomplished with old cohorts Bill Murray and co-screenwriter Roman Coppola (2007's *The Darjeeling Limited*) – is no exception. Anderson has always shown a predilection for fort-building films, centred on self-contained (and often deeply dysfunctional) worlds. There was the campus of *Rushmore* (1998), the New York City townhouse of *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001), the neurotic bathysphere of the good ship Belafonte in *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* (2004), and now New Penzance, a coastal island off New England that's the setting of *Moonrise Kingdom*.

Sam Shakusky (Jared Gilman), a little-loved, Coke-bottle-glasses-wearing member of a Khaki

Scout troop camping on unpaved, unspoiled New Penzance, leaves a resignation note before plunging into the wilderness alone. Shortly afterwards, on the other end of the island, Suzy Bishop (Kara Hayward), disgruntled only daughter of a pair of unhappily married lawyers (Frances McDormand and Murray), also disappears. When tell-tale correspondence reveals that she's off to a rendezvous with Sam, Scout Master Ward (Edward Norton) and the local constabulary – represented by loner Captain Sharp (Bruce Willis) – begin to comb the brush for the runaway couple. In the process they discover that Sam is an orphan, that his foster parents are indifferent to his fate, and that this latest black mark on the record will put him in the cold, institutional hands of social services (represented by Tilda Swinton, dressed like the usherette of Edward Hopper's *New York Movie*, with Flash Gordon hair).

The tale can be read as a statement of artistic purpose by Anderson, as the amateurs drawn together by Sam and Suzy – and love – circle the wagons against the outsiders, leading to a final showdown in the church – interchangeable here with the idea of community.

From his sometime home in Paris, Anderson spoke to me on the phone about *Moonrise Kingdom*, the teetering significance of 1965, the benevolent spirit of Benjamin Britten, and polypropylene book-jacket covers.

Nick Pinkerton: I wanted to start out by asking about the period setting of 'Moonrise Kingdom'. Your other films have been set in a theoretically contemporary but stylistically indeterminate time, while this one is solidly placed in 1965. What was behind that decision?

Wes Anderson: The island where we shot much of the movie is a place that was [once] only accessible by ferry – a place that had been sort of stuck in time. But they started building a huge suspension bridge to Newport, Rhode Island, which they finished in... I want to say 1965. And after staying exactly the same for 100 years, the place became a suburb of Newport and changed radically in the next ten years. So there's some degree to which this movie is set in an American village that doesn't really exist in the same way it did anymore.

NP: I think of 1965 as a precipice year – literally the dividing line between the early 60s and late 60s, with all the cultural shifts that go with that. The scouts' world is almost Norman Rockwell. ➡

Set on an island off the coast of the US in the mid-60s, on the eve of that decade's upheavals, 'Moonrise Kingdom' is just the latest of the self-contained worlds created by director Wes Anderson (right). He talks to Nick Pinkerton

AN ISLAND OF HIS OWN



PHOTOGRAPH BY THIERRY BOUET/CONTOUR BY GETTY IMAGES

Wes Anderson Moonrise Kingdom



◀ **WA:** Yes. I mean these kids that are in the story, she's bound to end up at Berkeley or something and he's probably going to get sent to Vietnam – maybe he's going to just miss it. That's the culture they're about to head into.

NP: You were only alive for less than a year in the 1960s, but they seem to be a major touchstone for you.

WA: I think people associate me with something simply because I've had quite a lot of music from the 60s and 70s, but so much great pop music was made then, it's just sort of natural. I don't really feel any particular affinity with that period over any other, but maybe I have that wrong.

NP: Was there a particular character or image or scene that the script of 'Moonrise Kingdom' developed from?

WA: I wanted to make a movie on an island of this kind, and I wanted to do something about two 12-year-olds who fall in love in a way that is overwhelming for them – and is slightly disturbing to everyone around them. And then I had this idea of a scene of the two of them in some lagoon somewhere. I had an idea of this music that they could be listening to, and this scene that could be played with the two of them, and it sort of grew around that.

NP: The scene between the kids at the inlet is rather intimate and squeamish. Why was that degree of detail called for?

WA: Well, I guess that's sort of the subject matter. I want to bring the story to life. If the question is, "Why was I drawn to that?", I think I know the answer: I remember what it was like. For somebody that age, when they fall in love, it can be so powerful, it almost becomes like some kind of fantasy – the whole world is altered. I kind of relate it to the way, when you're that age and you find a book that is going to be one of those ones that you will always love and – particularly if it's a fantasy kind of story – you want the fantasy to be reality so much that you start to kind of imagine

ISLAND OF LOST SCOUTS

Boy scout Sam (Jared Gilman) runs away with Suzy (Kara Hayward), to the dismay of Scout Master Ward (Edward Norton) and Captain Sharp (Bruce Willis)

that it is. There's something about children and their desire for fantasy to be real that's part of the... I don't want to say DNA or whatever it is, but that's what the movie's about.

NP: Looking at the world-for-two that the kids invent, I had to think of Richie and Margot in 'The Royal Tenenbaums', and their summer camping out in the Public Archives, which carries this same sense of a lost Edenic moment.

WA: I don't usually think of my other movies when I'm making a movie, but then afterwards I realise, "Oh gosh, there's this thing that's a lot like another thing and this other thing's a lot like another thing." It's never my intention. I always feel like now I'm doing something completely different, and then all of the sudden everybody says, "So, this is very similar to the rest of your work..." This always happens. For me it's always a new thing, but I know it's something in my programming. Everything gets run through the same operating systems, and it comes out pretty similar to the last one.

NP: The Public Archives in 'The Royal Tenenbaums' and the inlet in 'Moonrise Kingdom' make me think of Holden Caulfield's affection for the Museum of Natural History in 'The Catcher in the Rye' as this lost, perfect safe spot. Was that a formative book for you at all?

WA: Yeah, it was. I wasn't thinking of that with this one, but all these things kind of get mixed together. I didn't really have any particular thing that I was basing this place on, but I liked the idea that it was a place with a technical name, "Mile

ANDERSON SHELTERS

Left to right: 2007's 'The Darjeeling Limited', co-written with Roman Coppola; 2001's 'The Royal Tenenbaums'; 2004's 'The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou'



2.25 Tidal Inlet", that they've rechristened. I don't know if this comes across clearly, but Moonrise Kingdom is what they've named their cove – they decide Mile 2.25 Tidal Inlet doesn't have quite the flair that their own little country ought to have. Somewhere along the way I started thinking it would be nice if the whole movie could be one of the library books that the girl was carrying around in her suitcase, and Moonrise Kingdom seems like it could be an appropriate title.

NP: A number of fetish objects seem to keep appearing and reappearing in your movies: portable record players, air rifles and then these polypropylene book jacket covers.

WA: Those are the things they put on [books] at the library. I've often had library books in movies. All the books that the girl's got in her suitcase, she's stolen from the public library, the school library... *Royal Tenenbaums* starts out with a library book. In *Rushmore* he's in the school library – he meets his teacher through finding a library book... So really I just have a lot of library books. But I have a lot of books that aren't from the library as well, which I don't think get those jackets. I'm not a hundred per cent on that, but I bet they don't.

NP: Are all Suzy's books in the movie inventions?

WA: Yes.

NP: I loved the book 'The Parent's Guide to the Troubled Child', or something like that, with the 'Bonjour Tristesse' graphic on the cover.

WA: Oh, yeah! You got the reference on that one. *Coping with the Very Troubled Child*. [laughs] I think it's important: it's not just 'The Troubled Child', it's 'The Very Troubled Child'.

NP: To speak a bit more about references, the title 'Moonrise Kingdom' puts one in mind of lush, fantastic directorial visions like Frank Borzage's 'Moonrise' (1948) or Fritz Lang's 'Moonfleet' (1955).

WA: The Borzage is where that part of the title is stolen from. You rarely hear about a 'moonrise'.





NP: The kids in the movie are both first-time film actors. What particular qualities were you looking for when you cast your net?

WA: I don't know what I was looking for, but what I responded to. Jared [Gilman], in his audition, was wearing these [basketball player] Kareem Abdul-Jabbar-type glasses with a strap around them – athletic glasses – and he had very long, crazy hair. I responded most to the little interview that the casting director had done with him, and how he communicated himself with this high enthusiasm. He just struck me as very funny. Once we got him the way he was going to look in the movie, he showed other qualities that were interesting – he became more and more thoughtful.

With Kara [Hayward], on the other hand, it was when she read the scene. Of all of the thousand girls who read the scene, she was the only one who just seemed to be making up the words herself, and it sounded completely naturalistic and spontaneous. I'd heard the scene done a trillion times, and I was sick of the scene, and suddenly it was alive again. It was as simple as that.

NP: You keep a lot of quite rough-edged takes in the final movie.

WA: Yeah. It's nice when something goes a little wrong, because it makes people even more spontaneous – then something real is happening in front of you. Altman always says that he's waiting for accidents, and the takes he wants are the ones where there was an accident. Altman's always taking that further, certainly, but I like it when you have a surprise.

NP: But the movie on the whole is pretty rigorously storyboarded too.

WA: Yes, and with this one we did a lot of preview-type dry-run stuff, which I haven't done so much in the past. But with any kind of action thing, it's very helpful to me.

NP: There is a lot of action. The score sometimes sounds like it's coming out of a spaghetti western, while the Khaki Scout camp could be from a John Ford cavalry picture. In fact there are a lot of sublimated genre elements in the movie. I read that you screened Don Siegel's *'Escape from Alcatraz'* for Jared.

WA: Well, I was just trying to tough him up a little. [laughs] I wasn't particularly tapping into *Escape from Alcatraz* myself. I just figured it couldn't hurt for him to study Clint Eastwood a little bit.

NP: The scenes between Sam and Bruce Willis's

'It's nice when something goes a little wrong, because it makes people even more spontaneous'

Captain Sharp are interesting. How would you describe the dynamic there?

WA: I think the captain feels for him. Bruce's character knows the drill that they've got to follow, but he doesn't particularly believe in it. He's like, "Look, you gotta get with the programme. I didn't make the rules..." I don't think he particularly feels he has the answers for this kid, but he begins to figure something out on his behalf. He begins to sense that this kid is getting the short end of the stick.

NP: There's always this woeful Hank Williams music drifting around when Sharp's on the scene.

WA: The Hank Williams was something we thought of after we shot the first scenes with him. My editor Andy [Weisblum] and I were in the cutting room and – having a look at Sharp and his office, which is like a shed at the end of the dock – I just wanted to put something on the radio. He's fishing with an old man who seems to be his sidekick... Hank Williams seemed about right, and we put it in. It really seemed to suit him, so we ended up putting it in practically every time you lay eyes on Bruce Willis. There's Hank Williams playing on his radio in his police station wagon or on his radio or in his office, or wherever he is.

NP: The big musical presence in *'Moonrise Kingdom'*, though, is Benjamin Britten.

WA: Britten is the big one. The other music to me is stuff on the side, but Britten is what the movie is sort of built on. I was in [Britten's opera] *Noye's Fludde* when I was eight years old, nine years old, and I loved that music. I've always been interested in Britten, and it happens that he's written and made quite a number of pieces that are expressly for children, so that was sort of what I built from for the sound of the movie – the world of it.

NP: The opening with Britten's *'The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra'* sets the stage so well, as you have this patiently explaining adult voice guiding the listener through these massive sounds that are far beyond the simple explanation being given.

WA: Yeah, it's the drama the way they see it. For us

they're just kids wandering around the house, but they see grand things coming. I love that piece.

NP: And *'Noye's Fludde'* is supposed to be performed with a largely amateur cast, which plays into the element of amateur theatrics in your films.

WA: Yes, yes, absolutely. [For productions of *Noye's Fludde*] it's to be an amateur cast, and it's written to be performed in a church rather than any kind of theatre auditorium, and that's something very unique about it. It's interesting that Britten would write something to be done by non-professionals. He wanted to give something to church groups to do all over the world, which they do, so it has its own life outside of any arts organisation.

NP: There's a contrast in *'Moonrise Kingdom'* between messiness and precision, amateur and professional actors, and then the innocence of Sam and Suzy's courtship compared to these messy adult relationships. Do you see adulthood as something despoiled or imperfect, comparatively?

WA: I would think it's all imperfect. The problems don't go away just because you get old.

NP: There's a sense in the film, though, of a lost paradise – something that can't be recaptured.

WA: Not very many things can. Usually when you say, "Gosh, we had such a great time at such-and-such, let's do it again," and you go back – if it was a really magical experience, you'll just have to wait for another one to formulate itself, because the chemistry all has to add up right. But I don't particularly look back and say, "Oh, the magical moments of childhood." There are magical moments all through people's lives, and those become landmarks – milestones, I guess. That's the perspective I'm coming from.

NP: Is this formulation of magical moments something you aim to do when making a film?

WA: I always say you have to get lucky. The cameraman who worked for us on the short film of *Bottle Rocket*, Barry Braverman, still works with me in different ways, even on *Moonrise Kingdom*. Barry used to say every day, "Let's get lucky" – that was his whole thing. In a movie, you plan what you plan and you put all the stuff together, and then you hope when the camera's rolling that the thing is really going to occur and that somehow it's going to become something memorable. And there's a reason why people say, "Take 18" – they're waiting to get lucky.

■ *'Moonrise Kingdom'* is released on 25 May, and will be reviewed in the July issue

Reader offers

COMPETITIONS

RAFI PITTS: Three box-sets to be won

Rafi Pitts has been an influential name in the new wave of Iranian cinema. Artificial Eye now bring together three of his films in one collection. Making its UK DVD premiere is *Sanam*, an affecting drama about a woman and her son who are forced to confront an avalanche of problems after

the death of their husband/father. *It's Winter* illuminates the plight of a generation torn between a desire to leave their country while bound by blood to their home. *The Hunter* is a powerful thriller about a man on the run after shooting a policeman. We have three copies to give away.

To be in with a chance of winning, please answer the following question:

Q. In which of his films does Rafi Pitts also star in the lead role?

- a. The Hunter
- b. It's Winter
- c. Sanam



WIN

DAVID LYNCH: Box-set and CD to be won

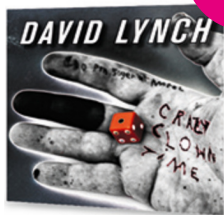
To celebrate the work of the iconic David Lynch, Universal Pictures (UK Ltd) bring six of his films to Blu-ray and DVD in a deluxe limited-edition package (released on 4 June). It features *Wild at Heart*, *Lost Highway*, *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*, *Eraserhead* (which has been remastered by Lynch himself), plus *Blue Velvet* and *Dune* (both of which feature never-before-seen interviews and outtakes). We have this collection plus Lynch's *Crazy*

Clown Time album (out now from Sunday Best) on CD to give away to two lucky readers.

To be in with a chance of winning, please answer the following question:

Q. Which animal did Lynch use to promote 'Inland Empire' in Hollywood?

- a. A monkey
- b. A cow
- c. A rabbit



WIN

WORLD CINEMA: Directories on China, Sweden, Britain and East Europe to be won

Intellect Books' Directory of World Cinema series provides collections of essays and criticism to highlight the significance of and place in cinema history of a variety of regions of the globe. The latest editions include Britain, China, East Europe and Sweden. Typical articles include the characteristic genres of Swedish cinema, among them silent films, erotica, and crime *noir*; the important regional variations that reflect the distinctive cultures of Britain;

and the horror, romantic-comedy and kung-fu genres of Chinese Cinema. We have three sets to give away.

To be in with a chance of winning, please answer the following question:

Q. Who directed the Swedish film, 'Let the Right One In'?

- a. Lasse Hallström
- b. Lukas Moodysson
- c. Tomas Alfredson



WIN

JACK NICHOLSON: Five biographies to be won

Originally published in 1975 as *Jack Nicholson: Face to Face*, this is the first book written about the enigmatic star, and the only one to have Nicholson's participation. The authors began interviewing the actor for a thesis for a film class, which then morphed into a larger portrait of Nicholson's craft.

The result is a book of unguarded interviews during his early years in the industry, plus conversations with his colleagues, including Dennis Hopper, Hal Ashby and Roger Corman. Now republished by the University Press of Kentucky, we have five copies to give away.

To be in with a chance of winning, please answer the following question:

Q. In which film does Nicholson play the character Billy 'Bad Ass' Buddusky?

- a. Five Easy Pieces
- b. The Last Detail
- c. Easy Rider



WIN

HOW TO ENTER

Email your answer, name and address, putting either 'David Lynch Prize', 'Rafi Pitts Box-set', 'World Cinema Books' or 'Jack Nicholson Books' in the subject heading, to s&scompetition@bfi.org.uk. Or send a postcard with your answer to either 'David Lynch competition', 'Rafi Pitts competition', 'World Cinema Books competition', or 'Jack Nicholson Book competition', Sight & Sound, BFI, 21 Stephen Street, London W1T 1LN.

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As a new digital print restores *'The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp'* to its Technicolor glory, we reproduce two key artefacts from its production: a tapestry and a treatment

THE EARLY LIFE OF COLONEL BLIMP



OFF THE DRAWING BOARD
From top: Roger Livesey as Clive Candy, aka Blimp, in the Turkish bath scene; a production sketch for the scene, signed by the crew; the crew presenting the framed sketch to Michael Powell

Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's announcement during the dark days of World War II that, in the face of opposition from Churchill, they planned to make a Technicolor epic based on newspaper cartoonist David Low's wickedly satirical character Colonel Blimp – a bluff old army man, by gad sir! – took some chutzpah. But in their concern at what they believed would be a dangerously mocking portrait of the Armed Forces at a time of national crisis, Churchill and others failed to see that the film would turn out to be one of British cinema's most celebratory and profound statements about national character.

Which makes it all the more shocking that for nearly 40 years, until the 1980s, the film could only be seen in heavily edited versions that removed the flashback structure that gives the story so much of its poignancy. In the full 163-minute version – now impeccably digitally restored – we first meet Major-General Clive Wynne-Candy (Roger Livesey) in 1942, sweltering in a Turkish bath. A brash young army officer, who sees the likes of Wynne-Candy as anachronistic 'Blimps' in a time of "total war", has come to capture him as part of a military exercise – prompting the old general to look back to his own hothead youth 40 years earlier, when he caused a diplomatic incident in Berlin by fighting a duel with a German officer. It's while recuperating in Berlin that Candy and his opponent in the duel, Theo Kretschmar-Schuldorff (Anton Walbrook), strike up the friendship that will endure for the rest of their lives – and Candy falls in love with Edith, the first of three incarnations of his feminine ideal, all played by Deborah Kerr.

Pressburger would cite *Blimp* as his favourite among all his collaborations with Powell, who in turn would say of his partner's magnificent script that it "should be in every film archive, in every film library". Overleaf we publish edited extracts from Pressburger's early, handwritten treatment for the film, which give fascinating insights both into its genesis and into the nature of the collaboration between the two filmmakers, who famously shared the joint credit "written, produced and directed by...". So many visual touches are here in Pressburger's original treatment, while the writer's occasionally eccentric English suggests that Powell – often seen primarily as the director in the team – may have had some hand in writing the film's perfectly tuned dialogue. ♦♦ James Bell

■ *'The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp'* is rereleased in a restored print on 18 May

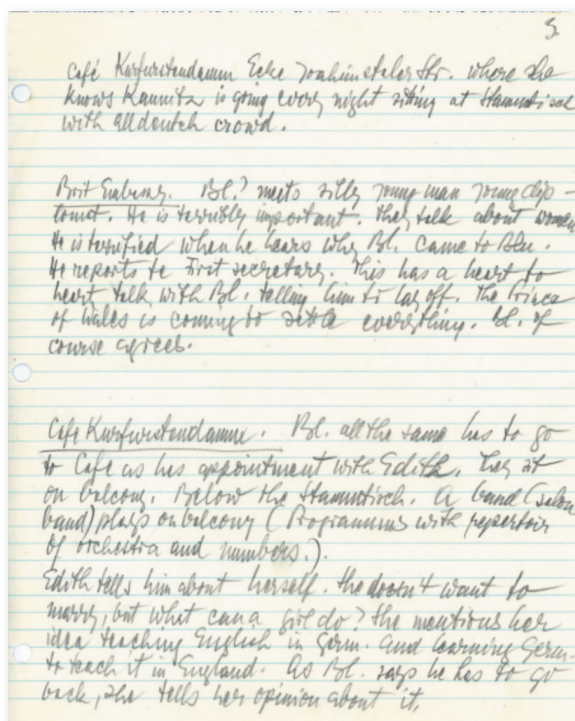
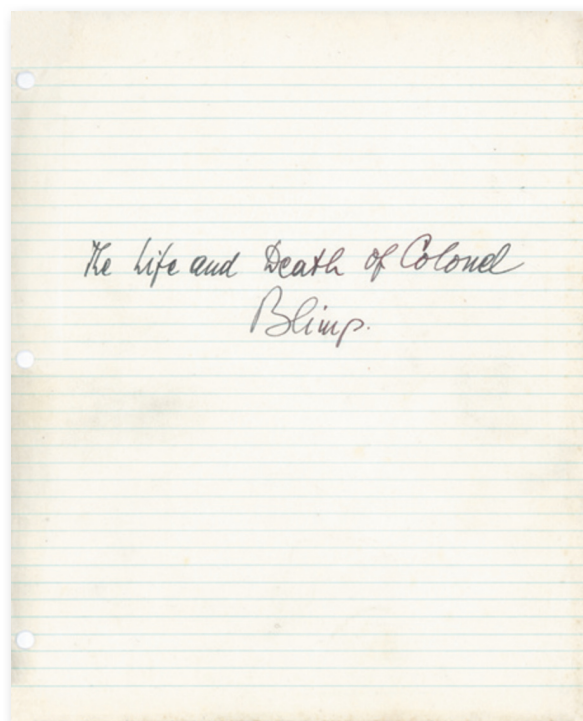


DREAM WEAVING
 The credits of 'The
 Life and Death of
 Colonel Blimp' feature a
 tapestry, below, specially
 embroidered by the Royal
 College of Needlework,
 and based on a sketch,
 right, by production
 designer Alfred Junge.
 (Our thanks to Kevin
 Macdonald for loaning
 the original tapestry
 to photograph)



COURTESY KEVIN MACDONALD/PHOTOGRAPHY BY BONNIE HACKSTON

The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp



FROM PAGE TO SCREEN

Emeric Pressburger's 25-page treatment for 'The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp' (above) is handwritten in pencil. Here we reproduce eight edited extracts from it alongside stills of the scenes as realised in the finished 1943 film. We have included Pressburger's idiosyncratic spellings, abbreviations and occasional uses of German when the English word eluded him – evidence not only of the heat of inspiration, but of the fact that he was writing this remarkable document in a foreign language

1

Turk[ish] Bath. [The treatment opens with the following scene, but in the finished film it is prefaced by 1942 scenes featuring the elderly Blimp, from which we then flash back 40 years to...]

Blimp [Roger Livesey, below] meets a fellow officer with whom he served for 8 months in a blockhouse in the Boer War. They sing to each other the Wagner aria [in the film this is replaced by one from Ambrose Thomas's opera 'Mignon']. An old man who wants to sleep doesn't succeed to stop them. The other fellow wants to show a letter to Bl[imp]. It came from Germany from the sister of the young man's niece's governess...

The two young officers are leaving the Turk Bath. At entrance they meet the annoyed old fellow who is a general(!). The General starts to shout at them: "You young fools. You should shame yourself! There's a war on and you are disturbing peace in a Turk Bath."... Suddenly as the wind blows coat of Blimp the Gen. realises the V.C. on Bl's chest. Startled he asks: "What is this?" We learn about Bl's South Afr[ica] war exploits.

Nothing more remains for the Gen. than: "Why this singing?" We learn about blockhouse and [the fact that the aria was the] only record [Blimp had to listen to there for eight months].



2

Little salon of Adlon [Hotel in Berlin, where Blimp has come, summoned by the letter mentioned in the previous scene, to counter claims about British atrocities in the Boer War being spread by the German spy Kaunitz, formerly a prisoner of Blimp's in South Africa].

Bl[imp] in mufti comes in. She [Edith, played by Deborah Kerr, below] is waiting for him. They are alone. She explains [about the extreme German nationalist organisation] 'Alldeutscher Verband'... We learn that she, Edith Hunter, lost her job. Now she is trying [sic] to get home... Bl. thinks he too should call at consulat [sic] where he has a young friend from public school.

Before she goes they make an appointment in the Café Kurfurstendamm Ecke [on the corner of] Joachimstaler Str. where she knows Kaunitz is going every night sitting at Stammtisch [a regular table where friends meet] with Alldeutsch crowd.



3.

Brit Embassy. Bl[imp] meets silly young... diplomat. He is terribly important. They talk about women. He is terrified when he hears why Bl. came to B[er]l[in]. He reports to First Secretary. This [First Secretary] has a heart to heart talk with Bl. telling him to lay off... Bl. of course agrees.

Café Kurfurstendamm. Bl. all the same has to go to Café as his appointment with Edith. They sit on balcony. Below [is] the Stammtisch. A band (salon band) plays on balcony...

Edith tells him about herself. She doesn't want to marry, but what can a girl do? She mentions her idea [of] teaching English in Germ. And learning Germ. to teach it in England...

In the middle of this Kaunitz arrives. He can't see Bl. but this one recognises him all right. Yes, he is the wretched skunk who was prisoner for 4 weeks in the blockhouse. Bl. sees them sitting there and make the rituals of drinking beer.

Bl. sorry he can't do anything but at least he wants a joke. He asks through the girl to ask the band to play the part from the Troubadour [in the film, the aria from 'Mignon' Blimp was singing earlier – which drove Kaunitz mad when he was Blimp's prisoner in the blockhouse in South Africa].

Like bitten by a mosquito Kaunitz turns towards the band. He asks a waiter to stop the band. The band leader tells to the waiter: it [the song] has been requested. Waiter goes back to Kaunitz. Now he goes himself to the band. Here he learns from which table the request came. He looks towards Bl. and recognises him. He goes to Bl's table and waves for his companions to come up. Three Burschenschaftsbrüder [student-fraternity brothers] come up. Kaunitz starts to tell to them and later to the whole café that Bl. is one of the criminals of the aggressors of the Boers.

Edith dolmetsches [interprets]. Bl. says he is a traitor and a liar... The Burschen intervene and say that Kaunitz is one of theirs and that K's views are theirs.

Bl. gets angry. One of the men understands English. Somebody says that in the Aldeutscher Verband there are officers of the Germ. Army. Bl. in the heat of the discussion says that they can be ashamed too.

General consternation.



4.

Brit Embassy. [After the scene in the café, in which Blimp is seen to have insulted the German Army, thus causing a diplomatic incident, German officers have drawn lots to decide who will have the privilege of challenging Blimp to a duel.]

... Bl. thinks this is a nonsense. He has never seen the man he supposed to fight...

The girl protests... What about the truth?

Both are silenced... They are now in the focal points of high diplomacy and they must leave things to those who understand matters like this. They should be happy after having behaved like they have to count on such men like the men from the Embassy.

Gymnasium of the Uhlán [German cavalry] barracks.

... The German officer is Leut. Theobald (Theo) Kretschmar-Schuldorff [Anton Walbrook, right and below].

The duell [sic] with all the ceremonies in the huge echoy [sic] gym. It is night.

Both are wounded.

An ambulance car takes both of them with high burning torches out of the courtyard.



5.

Idyllic country hospital [where Blimp and Theo are both recovering from injuries sustained in the duel].

... Bl[imp] enquires about Theo. He learns from nurse th[at] the German has also enquired about him. He asks whether they could meet? Nurse enquires and as German's reaction very favourable, she pushes Bl's bed to Theo's room.

Theo's room. This is their first meeting.

From this on in the next 3 months they meet every day. Sometimes in their bedrooms, sometimes on the balcony of the hospital to enjoy the first sunrays of the year. They learn many things about each other.

Theo tells him he is against duelling. But what could he do? What choice did he have?

Of course the girl meets Theo too.

What are these three talking about?

The two men talk about soldiering. The German comes from a soldier family. But Germans had no wars for a generation. Good for the English! They have the whole world for their fightings. He, Theo, has only the hobby of studying explosives.

We see the difference of the two soldiers. The English takes things easily. The German on the heavy side. For Blimp war is adventure like hunting. For the German serious, to kill or be killed.

Theo has a chance (first in Blimp's present [sic], then alone) to speak to Edith and to hear her speaking. He is shy first but she talks about herself more and more freely.

What Bl. thinks is silly, Theo admires. What a marvellous thing to have a wife like her. German girls are only silly geese. But Bl. doesn't understand this...

So a certain link develops between Theo and Edith. One day by chance they are alone. Theo has developed a very warm feeling towards her. And so did she. He tells her about this and she admits: she is not Bl's fiancée at all. This happens on the day before Bl. and she supposed to return home.

Bl. takes the news that she stays with Theo very lightly. But when he is alone he suddenly realises that he is missing her.

The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp

6.

a.) 1918. Outpost in France. Bl[imp, now a colonel in World War I] goes on leave. Night.

b.) He arrives at post in the middle of night... Place enormously crowded. Every building full. Bl. has theory that one man can be accommodated anywhere. He simply goes into the next house. Full with nurses who just arrived from England. Some 80 of them. He talks to one of them [Barbara, also played by Deborah Kerr, bottom] who is like Edith was. He only learns that she is from Yorkshire. He goes. He tells the remarkable likeness to an officer.

c.) ...He is woken up... Germans are approaching... We hear them calling: the war is over.

d.) In a Yorkshire cloth factory. The last khaki cloth comes from the weaving spools. It means the end of the war.

Barbara's parents own the factory. Barbara shows Bl. around. The first cloth to be woven is going to be her wedding dress.

A beautiful estate. From far away a voice is calling: "Barbaraaaaa! –"

B[arbara] & Blimp are walking in the distance. They call back. A pries[t] is there to talk to Bl. He is rather reluctant to talk to him.

e.) Drawing room. The priest is thanking for Bl's arranging the concert for the Red Cross. Bl. admits his personal reasons. He wanted to find a girl who was nurse in the war and about whom he only knew she was from Yorkshire, so he arranged the concert under the condition that former nurses should help. So he met her, Barbara Wynne.



7.

Third episode. 1940 or 1939. [By now Blimp is a general and Theo has come to England as a refugee from the Nazis.]

Tribunal. Waiting room. All sort of Germans, mostly refugees. One comes out, is interviewed. Theo's turn. He seems to wait somebody.

Before the judges. Theo says he has expected his only friend here in the country to plead for him, Gen. Wynne-Candy [Blimp's real name]. But he is in France...

An orderly comes in and says into the judge's ear something.

Blimp is here. In he comes. General greeting. Bl. has two days' leave. He is very martial. He gets Theo free. But in between we hear Theo's story. Edith has killed herself... [In the finished film, Theo simply says that Edith has died.]



8.

Night. Bl[imp]'s house. ... Bl. & Theo have dinner.

They talk about their own countries. Theo tells about his sons who are poisoned [by Nazism] and have given him up. About him loving his country but agreeing that it has to be beaten so hard that it won't forget. He will offer his services to England. He is an expert in explosives, he studied it through decades.

We hear Bl's views about the war. How sure he is that the Germans will be easily beaten because right is on our side. He is going to France to-morrow.

It is late. Theo must go home before curfew starts but Bl. takes responsibility for him.

Then they talk about Bl's private life. We learn that Barbara has died 15 years ago in some kind

of tropical disease... [This detail is not included in the finished film.]

They speak also of Bl's never forgetting Edith. His looking always for the same type of girls. When finally Theo goes, Bl. has a car to take him home. It is a car driven by an ATS [a woman soldier in the Auxiliary Territorial Service]. She is very efficient. We don't see her face.

In car in Blackout.

Theo talks to the girl. Her name is Angela [also played by Deborah Kerr, above]. She tells [Theo] that she was chosen by the General from 5,000 ATS. She doesn't know why. She is sorry to lose the job as Gen. leaves to-morrow.

A car is coming towards them. Theo sees her face. He understands why she was chosen.

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With our ten-yearly 'Greatest Film of All Time' poll due in the September issue, **Michael Atkinson** anatomises critics' obsession with enshrining cinema's 'top ten'

LISTOMANIA

POLL COUNTDOWN

No. 2

As far as we can tell, the first time anyone thought to take an 'expert' poll to form an amalgamated list qualitatively summing up an artform's 'best' manifestations over its entire lifespan, the year was 1952, and it was in Brussels. Feature-length cinema, which for some reason is the only kind ever to be measured this way, was only 46 years old. A post-war cultural *soirée*, the Festival Mondial du Film et des Beaux Arts de Belgique, polled 100 industry bigwigs (mostly directors), of whom only 63 deigned to answer. Carl Dreyer's number one was *The Birth of a Nation* (1915); four out of Cecil B. DeMille's top ten were directed by Cecil B. DeMille. The winner, by a presumably statistically irrelevant calculation, was Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). *Sight & Sound* was hot on the Belgians' heels later that year, of course. This time, only critics were asked, but again, oddly, only 63 (out of 85 petitioned) contributed lists. De Sica's barely four-year-old *Bicycle Thieves* was dubbed numero uno.

It's strange to think that this accountants'-reflex, oligarchical canon-building phenomenon had never occurred to anyone before Elizabeth became queen – not regarding any cultural product, at least. There had never been, apparently, year-end 'ten best' lists of books or plays during the 19th and early 20th centuries, nor had there been, then or before, any effort to collect and collate expert opinions about 'the greatest ever' of anything. (The pioneering glazomaniac who first thought in annual terms appears to have been *The New York Times*'s Mordaunt Hall, who began assembling his unranked 'top ten movies of the year' lists in 1924.) Today 'greatest' lists of all stripes comprise a huge percentage of what passes for cultural journalism online and in print, suggesting that *Sight & Sound*, for all of its vaunted disregard for pure populism, may have culpability in what many have seen as the atomised trivialisation of film culture at large.

Or maybe it's the Belgians. In any case, here we are again, facing the business end of *Sight & Sound*'s decadal survey, a project as slippery as any electoral process or winds-of-opinion political poll. On a strictly practical level, a social scientist could easily vet the six lists

accrued so far for the circumstantial variables that can change a good deal in ten years' time – namely, memory, fashion, platform technology and restorational achievements.

Memory, of course, can change a good deal more quickly than that, but as of 1952, cineastes had to rely almost exclusively on their hippocampi to sort out their personal hierarchies. When Georges Sadoul wrote his *Dictionnaire des Films* (1965), itself one of the first publications to establish a canon of 'important works' in the medium, he worked mostly with decades-old memories of movies' first runs, going back to the 1920s. (He was necessarily frank about it, admitting in his write-up of Henry Hathaway's 1935 *Peter Ibbetson*: "it is difficult to discuss this film without tending to invent certain details more than 25 years after being burnt by its flame.") Certainly, in *Sight & Sound*'s first poll, roseate youthful memories of *Le Million* (1931) and *Le jour se lève* (1939), both prominent on the 1952 list, were powerful but fleeting; those films faded quickly from view thereafter, and not even their availability on home video decades later has rescued them.

Fashion-wise, look at the difference between 1962 and 1972, representing the sudden rise and ubiquity of New Wave film culture and auteurist cinephilia. Suddenly, it seems, dinosaurs like *Greed* (1924) and *Ivan the Terrible* (1944) were no longer as tantalising (perhaps once the memory had been refreshed with film-club and classroom rescreenings?), but the more graceful, sprightlier achievements of *The General* (1926) and *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942) were. No film aesthetic was as decisively felled by fashion as Italian neorealism: whereas *Bicycle Thieves* topped the 1952 list, it slid to no. 7 ten years later, vanished thereafter and has yet to return (though it still made the directors' top ten in 2002). *La Terra trema* (1948) made one tentative appearance in 1962; even that Italian stalwart *L'avventura* (1960), prominently placed practically since it was first released, slipped out of the top ten in 1992 and has yet to make a comeback. *Seven Samurai* leapt to no. 3 in 1982 – after its 1981 European rerelease – before slipping out of the critics' top ten for good. Oscar-style sentimentality shouldn't be ignored, either: the sudden appearance of *Pather Panchali* (1955) on the 1992 list seems to have been prompted only by the double whammy earlier that year of Satyajit Ray's honorary Oscar and subsequent demise.

A question of availability

The ease and shruggable availability of so many fabled classics on video has seemed, so far, to have had a calcifying effect; the same handful of films keep showing up, although *Tokyo Story* (1953) finally made its first appearance in the top ten

in 1992, after a sufficient number of critics had caught up with it at home. (It now threatens never to leave, despite the onrush of other Ozus now available; only one Japanese film can occupy the list at a time, it seems.) There may be no underestimating the difference between being disappointed by a classic viewed in a shabby repertory cinema on a beat-up print in the 1970s, and being awakened to it today on your state-of-the-art home screen, after a good digital shave-and-haircut restoration. Take *L'Atalante* (1934), for example: after having just scraped in at no. 10 in 1962, it appeared mid-list in 1992 entirely thanks to Gaumont's 1989 revamp and subsequent rerelease. By 2002, its glamour had already worn off, and its stock dropped once again.

Of course, the culture is changing in other ways. Online discussion groups, chatrooms, blogs and comment chains have exploded the discourse exponentially in volume; whether the discourse has been consequently thinned out or bulked up in the process is a reading only history can provide.

Exactly how this may affect this year's balloting, or 2022's, is anyone's guess. Certainly, the usual gestalt of English-language critics isn't as sacrosanct as it used to be – digitally platformed movies and the conversation about them are now global phenomena, with user reviews on IMDb just as likely to hail from Singapore, Tunis or Murmansk as from London or New York. If a truly global survey was taken, would the selections remain the same? Maybe they would: the pan-Asian magazine *Cinemaya* voted *Tokyo Story* no. 1; French critics polled by *Positif* chose *La Règle du jeu* (1939), while their top ten had five further titles – *Citizen Kane*, 2001, *Vertigo*, 8%, *Sunrise* – in common with the ten picked for *S&S* in 2002.

It may be worth looking at the often surprising titles that emerge when individual countries, some still evolving a nascent idea of national film culture, vote for their home-grown 'greatest'. The results are often films no one elsewhere on Earth remains overly impressed with: Canada's *Mon oncle Antoine* (1971), Finland's *The Unknown Soldier* (*Tuntematon sotilas*, 1955), Australia's *Mad Max* (1979), China's *Spring in a Small Town* (*Xiao cheng zhi chun* – the 1948 original). Up until recently, the Czech Republic's 'greatest ever' film *Marketa Lazarová* (1967) was practically unheard of outside its native land. It may well be the best-ever Czech film, but if so, why was it a secret for so long?

Such choices can strike us as idiosyncratic, but clearly these selections are tied up with the hardly insignificant matter of national identity and ethnic self-image. Canadians apparently see something profound about themselves or their history in Claude Jutra's rather routine *Mon oncle* ➤



Poll countdown

◀ *Antoine* that they haven't found in the Cronenberg, Egoyan, Arcand or Maddin oeuvres, while Czechs somehow identify with the hairy-chested obliquity of František Vlácil's *Marketa Lazarová* – though in either case it'd be risky to draw conclusions. In a very general sense, this dynamic gives us a clue as to the provenance of what's deemed deathlessly glorious about the 'established' classics: they reflect us; they represent an ideal; they characterise us, as cinephiles, in certain ways.

Defining greatness

If you aggregate the top 20 or 30 films that most often make the global lists, you can quite easily deduce that the audience that worships 'cinema' as it's thus defined are of a certain tribe: proud humanists, sensitive liberals, aspiring *philosophes* when it comes to the ambivalent matters of love and violence and sociopolitics, aesthetes swooning over a certain type of poetic imagery (gauzy, leafy, hyper-composed). We usually prize 'realistic' stories over genre, and we respect history. We are moralists, but gentle ones, and we are Bazinians.

Undeniably, we also assess 'greatness' largely as a result of a film's narrative-visual density: most of the persistently chosen top-shelfers are thick, rich layer cakes, bursting with story, design, alternate readings, hypnotic visuals, multiple points of view, busy set pieces and tasteful auteurist bravado. Ozu and Keaton are the exceptions; for our masterpieces we rather reactionarily prefer Bosch-ness to Miró-ness, massive invention to lean, subtractive modernity.

This is hardly surprising: cinematic density is not only dazzling to watch and fun to write about (we are mostly dealing with the whims of writers), but it also more easily rewards multiple viewings, which in some minds is the essential first parameter for a 'best' – that you not tire of it after watching it twice. To say the least, this preference for profusion and volume elides huge chunks of cinema and cinematic achievement, and may be why, simply, worthy films from *Ordet* (1955) to *A Man Escaped* (1956) to *Taste of Cherry* (1997) have never been placed, and may never climb up the ladder.

A certain middle-class homogeneity may be inevitable with voting bodies, arriving at politicians or hall-of-fame entrants or best-ever cultural rankings that reflect nothing so much as the mid-range alpha wave of mass consciousness. Extreme experiences are winnowed out by sheer numbers. Thus we have yet to see, rather scandalously, a single Godard or Buñuel breach the top ten, and few films that might be deemed, even dimly, 'difficult'. Antonioni and Ozu aside, the polls slalom around 'slowness' and metaphysics as conscientiously as any 'people's choice' awards, leaving no chance for a Bresson or Tarkovsky to make the grade.

At the same time, as we commonly acknowledge, we need films to acquire a few barnacles with the passing of time before we anoint them. How will we know whether or not our first glowing reaction to *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* (2010) will wilt within a few years? But that condition has evolved with the culture and the depth of the library. As I



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Until recently, the Czech Republic's 'greatest ever' film was practically unheard of outside its native land

mentioned, *Bicycle Thieves* and *L'Avventura* hit no.1 and no.2 within a few years of their respective making, while *Persona* made no.5 in the 1972 list six years after its release. Since then, however, films have required a roughly 20-year seasoning period before being deemed ready. Perhaps as cinema itself expands in every direction, we have become less confident in our choices – and in poll-taking altogether.

On the face of it, this conservatism seems absurd. If you scan back over the history of the *Sight & Sound* poll, as well as the Oscars and every qualitative ballot-collection in between, it becomes clear that such contests are not definitive preservers of posterity deciding once and for all (but over and over again) what's 'best'. They are, in fact, snapshots of the zeitgeist in flux – a family photo of film culture's priorities and tendencies in that year, and that is all. So, why not treat them as such, and vote your passion? Are we so sure that *Uncle Boonmee*, for instance, isn't as mysterious and resonant and fascinating as *Ugetsu monogatari* (1953), or that *Once upon a Time in Anatolia* isn't in fact superior to Antonioni?

And what about the older films rediscovered and restored in the last decade – Shimizu Hiroshi's *Mr Thank You* (*Arigato-san*, 1936) or Anthony Asquith's *A Cottage on Dartmoor* (1929) or Robert Reinert's *Nerven* (1919)? Wouldn't you trade *Potemkin* for any of them, right now? Vintage-ageing may be a more complicated and corrupted influence than we suppose: who's to say to what degree 'classics' like *Singin' in the Rain* (1951) or *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) have attained a perpetual slot in the pantheon *because*

of their previous appearances and critical esteem, and the aura of collective reverence that has amassed around them? Go ahead, watch them again, with fresh eyes: personally, I can't imagine why anyone would choose that musical (I'd opt for a Minnelli) or that Kubrick (any of five others have aged far better). It's tempting to consider how their placement would shift if the voting took place in a vacuum, without any knowledge of past lists or awards.

No vacuum is nigh – quite the opposite. As our digital intercourse about all things continues to grow like kudzu, threatening to involve practically every human being on Earth in open conversation, the feedback loops surrounding cultural investigation and appraisal of all kinds will get so pervasive that it may well become impossible, some day soon, to arrive at a truly singular and independent perspective on a film – much less hope that that perspective is attained by others independently as well, and might therefore constitute a valuable consensus about what that film *is* and how good it actually might be. Is such a questionable thing even possible, or are our poll-taking endeavours destined, in a fondly Camusian way, to long for a singular ‘truth’ that we know cannot exist, under any conditions?

There are those who consider the whole troublesome business to be nonsense – in David Thomson's phrase, "a children's game". It's an easy score to say so, but it's also overlooking a few essential aspects of what makes cinema a culture and not merely a medium. For one thing, movies are convenient to the purposes of glazophilia – we attempt to codify the form's greatest achievements because it's new, its history is obtainable and definable, and the films to choose from are for the most part knowable and limited. If painting, fiction, theatre, poetry et al had such distinct parameters and accessible histories, you know critics and scholars in those areas would be just as prone to annual lists and rankings. It may well be a genetic reflex – a primal-brain instinct for prioritising materials and works, gathering a communal agreement about the prioritisation, and understanding what we have wrought as a society by asking, simply, which is best, which exemplifies us?

This is what criticism does: assesses, categorises, compares, celebrates, lionises, and winnows away the chaff. A tally of how we momentarily view cinema's peak manifestations is an integral part of the dialogue – a part that's fuelled by love, by a desire to exalt. (As Madness used to say: "Don't watch that, watch *this*!") When explication and theorisation is done, what do we have besides our transported experiences, our ecstatic exchanges with cinematic tissue? Poll lists are cultural housekeeping in a world nostril-deep in an endless ocean of marketing sewage and online distraction. It's democratic organisation for the sake of value, in the absence of which certain ideas of film and filmwatching – as well as a great many films in and of themselves – would be subsumed in the flood and lost. Disagree or disregard, by all means, but stand back: this is our tribe's way of saying, against the tide, This Is What Matters.

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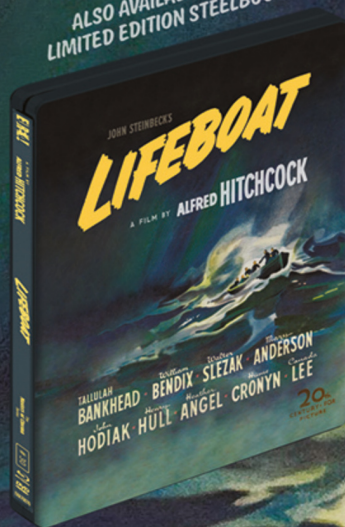
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Bertrand Tavernier's 1980 sci-fi one-off 'Death Watch' anticipates reality TV and shows Glasgow as it's never been seen before or since. He talks to **Pasquale Iannone**

LIFE EXPECTANCY

‘When I made the film, it was considered science fiction. Now it seems almost neorealist.” Bertrand Tavernier is talking about his extraordinary 1980 film

Death Watch (*La Mort en direct*), rereleased this month. “It’s not only the element of reality TV. There are many other aspects: you have teachers and novelists being replaced by computers, homeless people being evicted from the cities...”

Little seen in the UK since its first release, *Death Watch* was adapted from a British novel published in 1974 – David G. Compton’s *The Continuous Katherine Mortenhoe* (aka *The Unsleping Eye*), an eerie, prophetic vision of a not-too-distant future in which audiences feast on voyeuristic television. The book’s protagonist, Rod, has a camera implanted in his eye so that he can follow the last days of a terminally ill woman for a prime-time series called *Human Destiny*. Early in the novel, Rod explains the appeal of the shows: “They all aimed at total truthfulness about the human condition... They were sagas of human endurance, of the human spirit in extremis... The ratings showed that [TV station] NTV were right in judging the public’s deep, unconscious need. Its life was false, prettified into a bland, painless, deathless advertiser’s dream.

The public wanted, and deserved, to be reminded that this was only a half of life, the half allowed by technology gone wild.”

By the late 1970s, though still relatively early in his four-decade career as a feature director, Tavernier was already carving out a reputation for his assured eclecticism. After the low-key crime thriller *The Watchmaker of St Paul* (*L’Horloger de Saint-Paul*, 1974) and historical dramas *Let Joy Reign Supreme* (*Que la fête commence*, 1975) and *The Judge and the Assassin* (*Le Juge et l’Assassin*, 1976), the director turned to Compton’s slice of dystopian science fiction. To collaborate on the screenplay, Tavernier hired the noted American screenwriter and script doctor David Rayfiel, best known for his work with Sydney Pollack on films such as *Castle Keep* (1969), *Jeremiah Johnson* (1972) and *Three Days of the Condor* (1975).

Even before starting on the script, however, Tavernier had already decided on a location for his film. “After visiting Glasgow, I immediately bought the rights to the book,” he recalls. “I thought that the story called for an Anglo-Saxon setting. I liked Edinburgh, but Glasgow came as a shock. I liked its many different colours, the beautiful Mackintosh buildings. I loved the atmosphere, the feel of a working-class city.”

From an early Sergio Leone-esque shot that rises high over the Necropolis to the accompaniment

of composer Antoine Duhamel’s driving strings, it’s clear that Tavernier’s is a filmic depiction of Glasgow quite unlike any other. His Scope camera prowls around the city and its outskirts with the curiosity of the outsider. “I was influenced by some of the great Cinemascope directors – people like Otto Preminger, Richard Fleischer and Robert Altman,” the director explains. “I think Fleischer especially has never been given enough credit for the imaginative way he embraced the new format. He made a *film noir* in colour called *Violent Saturday* [1955] where I thought the use of Scope was completely organic.

“For me, Scotland and Glasgow were crying out for Cinemascope,” he continues. “In the great Scope films, you have a real feeling for place and how characters belong to that place, and I wanted that for *Death Watch*. I wanted to film the sky. I wanted to capture the decaying areas of the city as well as the more traditionally beautiful.”

A long-time fan of British cinema, Tavernier argues that our genre movies of the day made poor use of locations, unlike earlier work by Powell and Pressburger or Alexander Mackendrick. “When you think of [Powell and Pressburger’s] *I Know Where I’m Going!* or *Gone to Earth*, they had such a great sense of integrating landscape into the dramaturgy,” he says. “I grew up on those films. For me landscape has always been a way

of showing what is inside the character.”

For the lead roles in *Death Watch*, Harvey Keitel (Roddy) and Romy Schneider (Katherine) were both first choice for Tavernier, but neither was seen as commercially viable at the time, least of all by US producers. “For the part of Rod, the Americans wanted me to cast Richard Gere,” Tavernier recalls. “But I had loved Harvey in *Mean Streets* and *Taxi Driver* – he reminded me of John Garfield. He had that working-class demeanour, the charm, the sense of guilt.”

As the ambitious yet childlike ‘camera-man’, Keitel ventures into hitherto untapped areas of his acting range – as does Schneider, whom Tavernier had long admired, especially for her work with director Claude Sautet in films such as *Les Choses de la vie* (1970) and *César and Rosalie* (1972). But the two stars had very different approaches to their work, as Tavernier recalls: “Romy was so much more than a naturalistic actress. She had this extraordinary capacity of expressing the totality of a character with one line. This was the opposite of Harvey, who was from the Method school and would often want to discuss the details of the character for hours. Romy hated that. She wanted to be given direction and mood, but she also had a tremendous sense of the camera, to the point where she would ask what lenses we were using so she could adjust her performance – she was like Jean Gabin in that respect.”

Schneider captures perfectly her character’s moments of vulnerability, but also her strength and pride. “After arriving in Glasgow, just before we started shooting, Romy slipped a hand-written note under the door of my hotel room,” Tavernier recalls. “It read: ‘I will be your Katherine – without self-pity.’”

The director had long been interested in the expressive potential of voiceover, and in Rayfiel he found a collaborator who was a modern master of the technique. “I’ve used voiceover many times in my work, and for me it is like music,” Tavernier explains. “It is not informative – it gives you a sense of another period, like you are looking at things from a distance.”

Tavernier, who went on to work with Rayfiel again on the Franco-American jazz movie *Round Midnight* (1986), had particularly admired the writer’s (proto-Malickian) voiceover in *Castle Keep*. “I wanted to draw on David’s qualities as a writer,” he explains. “He had a very lyrical style which was influenced by writers such as Tennessee Williams and Willa Cather. He always loved to quote Cather’s famous phrase: ‘Whatever is felt upon the page without being specifically named there – that, we may say, is created.’”

In *Death Watch*, the voice we hear on the soundtrack belongs to Rod’s ex-wife Tracey (played in the film by Thérèse Liotard, but dubbed by Julie Christie). It surfaces intermittently on the soundtrack to comment on Rod’s actions: “Those images – he can show you things, places as if you’ve never seen anything before or been anywhere. I don’t think he knows a thing himself until he films it, and then he knows it. Something I never understood about Roddy – how he could do that. You must be able to love someone without understanding whole worlds of him.”

Another key aspect of the film’s soundscape (and one that works symbiotically with the voiceover) is the score by Antoine Duhamel, probably best known for his 1960s work with

‘The Americans wanted me to cast Richard Gere. But I had loved Harvey in ‘Mean Streets’ – he had the charm, the sense of guilt’



TERMINAL CONDITION

In *‘Death Watch’*, Roddy (Harvey Keitel, top) films the dying days of Katherine (Romy Schneider, far left). Below, director Tavernier on set with his two stars

Godard. “I had known Antoine for many years,” Tavernier recalls. “I worked on a short film with him in the 1960s, and that was where Godard noticed him and asked him to do *Pierrot le fou* and *Weekend*. I loved the score for *Pierrot* and I wanted to do something in the same direction for *Death Watch*.” The result is a strings-only score that recalls not only *Pierrot* but also Bernard Herrmann’s music for *Psycho*.

“I always like to give composers a dramatic

principle,” Tavernier explains. “For *Death Watch* I said, ‘Let’s work on a certain type of instrument. Let’s create a sound, the sound of Katherine, which will express her drive, her emotion.’ I wanted the music to reflect her personality. She’s not an introverted and narrow character – she is somebody who is incredibly generous, and the music has to describe her.” Duhamel would go on to work with Tavernier on several other pictures including *These Foolish Things* (*Daddy Nostalgie*, 1990) and *Laissez-Passer* (2002). But though the composer won the Silver Bear at the Berlin Film Festival for his work on the latter film, Tavernier laments the fact that Duhamel – now 86 – has never received the recognition his work deserves. “It’s because film critics rarely pay close attention to music,” he sighs.

Death Watch, however, is getting recognition once again. More than 30 years after its original release, it has been digitally restored by Glasgow-based distributor Park Circus under the supervision of its original cinematographer Pierre-William Glenn, and was unveiled – appropriately enough – at the Glasgow Film Festival in February, before going on a wider release this month.



■ *‘Death Watch’* is rereleased in a new print on 1 June



FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH
Béla Tarr, opposite, has stated that 'The Turin Horse', above, will be the last film he directs

*'The Turin Horse' is the last testament of the legendarily uncompromising Béla Tarr. He talks to **Jonathan Romney**, while overleaf DP **Fred Kelemen** analyses a remarkable collaboration and **Geoffrey Macnab** reports on the battle for the soul of Hungarian film*

GONE WITH THE WIND

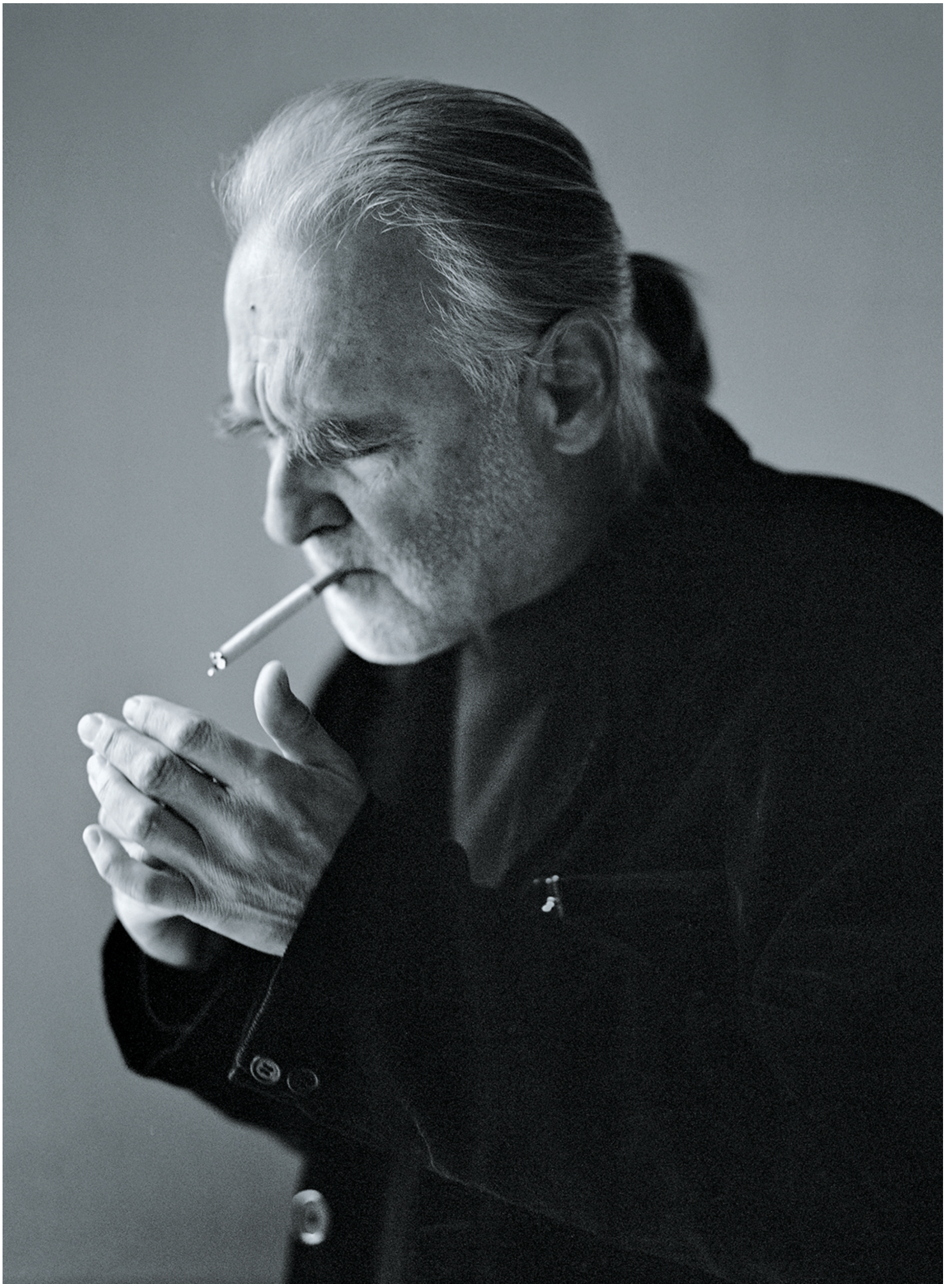
Béla Tarr's *The Turin Horse* (*A Torinói ló*) played in competition in Berlin last year – to great anticipation, given that the Hungarian auteur had announced that it would be his last film. He had also suggested that when viewers saw it, they would understand why. Indeed, the film does present itself quite assertively as a 'final statement' – but you'll have to see it to understand why.

Put simply, *The Turin Horse* – which Tarr says is "mostly about death and human beings and daily life" – is a typically austere, highly ritualised story about a carter (János Derzsi), his daughter (Erika Bók) and their horse, which suddenly refuses to cooperate with them. One's immediate response is to invoke Beckett, but you could also see the film as an equine rewrite of Herman Melville's story 'Bartleby the Scrivener', whose central character responds to all requests with the words, "I would prefer not to."

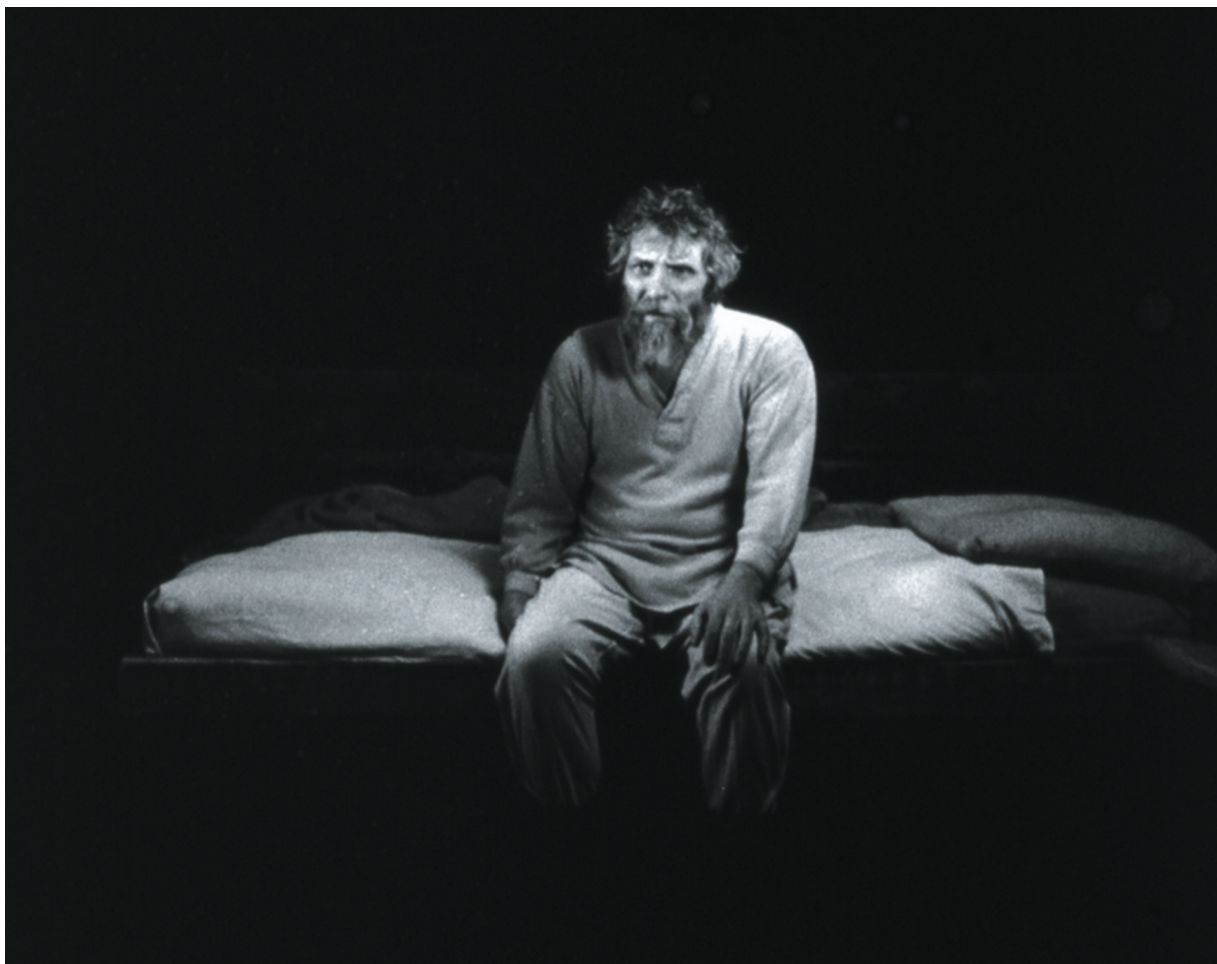
The film – Tarr's latest collaboration with his wife, editor and co-director Agnes Hranitzky, and his co-writer, the novelist László Krasznahorkai –

is prefaced by an anecdote about the horse whose whipping on a street in Turin in 1889 reputedly triggered the mental breakdown and subsequent silence of the great German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Tarr may have announced his own silence as a director, but we can expect to hear a lot more of him. He intends to be active as a producer, with features in the pipeline by Hungarian directors Agnes Kocsis, János Szász and Péter Gothár. He is also setting up a new film school in Split in Croatia and – as recently elected chair of the Hungarian Filmmakers' Association – was involved in the Hungarian Film Week held in February this year.

Tarr is an outspoken opponent of the Hungarian government's new film funding system, which he regards as part of its "political war against intellectuals" (see sidebar p.37). In February, Tarr described his response: "We have two ways. One way is sitting at home, crying and screaming... Or we can try to do something. My mentality is always to try to do something. If I do not accept the world, I have to change the world." Quite apart from anything else, this belies ➤



YOKED TOGETHER
'The Turin Horse,'
 right, is actor János
 Derzsi's fifth feature
 for Tarr, while Erika Bók
 appeared as a girl in
'Sátántangó,' below



◀ suspicions that *The Turin Horse* – bleak as it may be – in any way proposes a defeatist worldview.

The following interview took place in Berlin in 2011, just before *The Turin Horse* won the Jury Grand Prix.

Jonathan Romney: Was the Nietzsche story the origin of *'The Turin Horse'*?

Béla Tarr: I'll tell you the truth. In 1985, László [Krasznahorkai] gave a reading in a theatre in Hungary. At the end he read the text which is now the prologue of this movie, and the last question of course is, "What happened to the horse?" We were sitting and thinking how we could do something with this question – because everyone knows the Nietzsche story, and everyone's listening to it for Nietzsche, but nobody listens for the horse. I was always curious: what could happen to the horse?

JR: We assume that the carter's horse in the film is the same horse that Nietzsche met – but it struck me that perhaps it isn't. Is the Nietzsche story just a parable to begin the film?

BT: No, it's not a parable. This is a horse who has history, who has background, who is definitely somebody. In Hungarian if you say *torinói* with a small 't', it just means 'from somewhere' ['from Turin']. But if you write it with a big 'T', it looks like a name ['The Turin Horse']. She has a name. 'She' – because we have a female horse.

JR: The horse doesn't look well – it looks half asleep.

BT: We found her in a market in a small village in the Hungarian lowland. I said immediately, "This is the horse we need." You could see this horse

was humiliated. She's not that old, just around seven. She was a very sad horse. But I have to tell you, all horses are sad who are around people. The owner wanted to make her work, and she refused. And it happened like with Nietzsche, in real life – I stopped him immediately. I was screaming at him, and then he sold us this horse, and she's our horse now. Now she's OK – we found a nice place for her.

JR: The film isn't really about the horse, but the people.

BT: Of course. Of course, it's not a story – can you imagine someone going to a Hollywood studio with this story? Anyway, Agnes and I bought our house – a really wrecked, ugly former inn – we bought it and we rebuilt it. And in the courtyard there was a place for horses. And we thought about how we could shoot something there – maybe these people lived in this house, and maybe the horse was there, and maybe the

guy had a daughter. And that was the basic idea. We wrote a short synopsis together with László – and then we put it aside because we made *Sátántangó* [1994].

Later, when we had to interrupt the shooting of *The Man from London* [*A Londoni férfi*, 2007] because of [producer] Humbert Balsan's death, I was sitting at home and I couldn't do anything and I was terribly depressed. László said, "This will be good work therapy. Come and do a script about your obsession." So we had a lot of discussion about the father and the daughter, and who would be the neighbour, and who would come to the house. We had a fight about it. He got up and said, "Shut your mouth" – and left. And two days later he sent me this text, which was perfect. It was the whole film – 60 pages. It's a real literary work: it's not a script, it just looks like a short novel.

JR: I got the impression that the film is not really about the horse but about Nietzsche's silence. It's almost a silent film.

BT: Not only Nietzsche's silence – the silence of everybody. These people have a daily life. I wanted to show how it's difficult to *be* – how being is so hard, and so simple.

JR: The locations look very similar to the landscapes of *'Sátántangó'*. Was it shot in the same part of Hungary?

BT: No, *Sátántangó* was shot on the plain, the lowland. Here there are some hills and a small valley. I found just the valley with this lonely tree and I thought, "I need a house here." We built the house – it's real stone and wood. Everything is real, including the oven. But it's not that strong, ➡



HUNGARIAN DISHARMONIES

*Last year's shake-up of funding in the Hungarian film industry has pitted arthouse legend Béla Tarr against a man from the opposite extreme of the film industry – Hollywood producer Andrew Vajna, of 'Rambo' fame. **Geoffrey Macnab** reports*

For better or worse, the Hungarian film industry is now in the grips of the 'Vajna system'. In January 2011 the Hungarian-born Hollywood producer Andrew Vajna (whose credits include three Rambo films, two *Terminators* and a *Die Hard*) was appointed commissioner for the industry and given sweeping powers.

It's reductive and simplistic to talk of a civil war in Hungarian film. Nonetheless, the industry is sharply polarised, with film commissioner Vajna on one side and the country's leading director Béla Tarr on the other. Vajna is the pragmatist; Tarr (recently elected chairman of the Hungarian Filmmakers' Association) is the idealist. Both men represent very different traditions. Vajna, the producer of Schwarzenegger and Stallone films, prospered by making muscular blockbusters in the Hollywood of the 1980s and 1990s. Tarr, by contrast, is the quintessential arthouse director. You simply couldn't imagine Vajna producing a film like Tarr's *Werckmeister Harmonies* (2000) – a poetic black-and-white epic with only 39 shots, most of them several minutes long. Nor could you imagine Tarr directing the new *Die Hard* (which is due to shoot in Hungary this year).

Vajna's challenge in coming back to Hungary was to sort out the chaos left by the break-up of the Motion Picture Public Foundation of Hungary (MMKA). Set up in 1998 to fill the void left by Soviet-era bodies, this organisation collapsed with huge debts and was officially disbanded in 2011. The reasons why the MMKA was closed down remain a matter of fierce debate. Critics argue that the debts were just the pretext and that Prime Minister Viktor Orban's right-wing government was keen to reform the film industry.

Leading filmmakers were quick to protest against the restructuring. Tarr and Miklós Jancsó were among nine Hungarian directors who published a statement in February 2011 criticising the plans for "building a centralised system controlled by a single person". Vajna, meanwhile, has portrayed himself in interviews as a troubleshooter without a political agenda: a Hollywood producer who has come back to his homeland to use his expertise and contacts to help the local film industry out of crisis.

Last November a film law was passed confirming that the Hungarian National Film Fund would be the main funding body for film. In what Vajna saw as a major coup, it was also announced that the fund would receive money directly from the national lottery. Its budget for 2012 has been set at around €20 million.

Even so, the mistrust of Vajna remains. "Some of the producers were happy to welcome Andy Vajna – just a few of them," says Agnes Havas, general manager at the Hungarian National Film



HOLLYWOOD MUSCLE Hungarian supremo Vajna

Fund. "Everybody else turned toward Vajna with suspicion. They were thinking he was going to introduce a Hollywood type of system."

In early 2012, the Hungarian Filmmakers' Association organised the 43rd Hungarian Film Week. (It was a point of principle that the association did this without help from the National Film Fund.) Experimental films and documentaries were shown, as well as features. At the start of the week, the association published a statement: "The Hungarian Filmmakers' Association regards Hungarian cinema culture as one and indivisible. It considers documentary, feature, scientific, experimental, animation films, as well as all cinematic forms and genres equal... The Hungarian Filmmakers' Association does not consider film as a product of international show business and we are convinced that as the seventh art form, the Hungarian film is an organic part of national and European culture."

The statement was a clear dig at the fund, now centralised under Vajna's control, and considered by some to be neglecting documentary, animation and experimental work.

"These people [behind the Film Week] were respecting the culture," Béla Tarr stated of the event, which received symbolic support from the artistic directors of the Cannes, Venice and Berlin film festivals. "They [the festival directors] said very clearly that the filmmakers are in a big

The industry is polarised, with film commissioner Vajna on one side and the leading director Béla Tarr on the other

family and that we have to support each other. Everyone has their own film culture. Of course, every country is different and has different culture, background and financial situation. But by the end, when you switch off the light in the cinema, you will see human beings and you will feel human emotions. You will see human pain, human joy... The Hungarian filmmakers could see they were not lost and not forgotten."

To the outside observer, much of the criticism of Vajna seems jaundiced and unfair. There have been whispering campaigns about the activities of his company Intercom, registered offshore, and his as yet unfulfilled promises to bring Joe Eszterhas and Oliver Stone to Hungary to offer courses to Hungarian filmmakers. His links to Orban's government are also questioned, although he insists that he demanded (and received) full independence when he took on the job of commissioner.

When I spoke to Tarr in February, he suggested that a commissioner with such sweeping power might be needed "when you have some natural catastrophe – high water or earthquake or something... But do you think the Hungarian cinema is a catastrophic land? No, surely not!"

The major bugbear among Hungarian filmmakers like Tarr is that there is now only one "window" they can go through. Filmmakers who "think differently and have a different imagination have no chance". Vajna's response is that he has been cleaning the stables. The situation, he contends, was so chaotic after the MMKA collapsed that his priority was simply to ensure that the industry could function. The five-strong decision-making board is committed to accepting or rejecting any project submitted within 60 days, providing a reader's report. The board includes Vajna himself, experienced local producer Péter Miskolczi (whose credits include *Taxidermia*) and Agnes Havas.

"Everybody kind of hates us because nobody is getting it all [the public money], but at least we are putting order to the wreck and nobody is going bankrupt," Vajna stated recently. "Banks aren't closing down the producers, so I think we've accomplished quite a bit." He promises transparency and a mixed slate of films, from mainstream fare to work from new talent. As for his critics, he suggests, "they want to handle the money themselves. It is all about the money."

Tarr, meanwhile, is clearly exasperated by the debate about the future of Hungarian film. When I approached him again in early April on behalf of *S&S*, I received the following response from his assistant: "Béla says he is fed up with the whole Hungarian situation. He would gladly give an interview about anything else but this. Sorry."



DAILY GRIND
‘The Turin Horse’ follows the gruelling everyday rituals of the horse’s owner (János Derzsi, top) and his daughter (Erika Bók, above)

◀ because we knew we only needed it for one year. Afterwards, everything started collapsing.

JR: The film is very far from a tendency of rural cinema to be romantic or sentimental.

BT: That’s very far from me. In this case I could show you these people love each other, but this love is quite dry and simple – no emotions, nothing expressed, everything is hiding. He needs her, he needs the horse, and they need each other. Kundera talks about “the unbearable lightness of being” – I wanted to talk about the heaviness of being.

JR: Tell me about working with the actors. You’re asking them to do something very particular – it’s about repetition, routine. It’s almost mechanical.

BT: They’re not acting. I told them, “Just *do* – you have to cut the wood, you have to wash clothes, you have to go for water. That’s all.” They just worked. We had to prepare the actors, just to be very well trained with the horse. But fortunately János [Derzsi] grew up in the countryside and he’s a peasant, and she [Erika Bók] can learn everything very quickly – she’s used to physical work. They just had to learn to do everything very automatically – harnessing the horse, preparing the carriage... That’s what they had to train for.

JR: Erika Bók, who plays the daughter, played the little girl nearly 20 years ago in ‘Sátántangó’. It’s uncanny when we see her in ‘The Turin Horse’ looking out of a window, like a ghost. Did you want viewers to catch echoes of her in the earlier film?

BT: If you watch this movie, you can see I collected all of my manias. Like the girl looking out of the window. This is definitely a closing movie because I collected everything. I packed – it’s done.

JR: It feels as if you’re taking all your cinema and boiling it down, purifying it. It’s a minimal version of your cinema, distilled.

BT: Like a good spirit, you have to boil it and in the end, you have the real essence. This is the essence. This is the essence of my life and my films, and that’s all.

JR: It’s a great film for sound. There seems to be music in the wind – a repeated three-note refrain. Is that just sound design, or composer Mihály Vig working with the sound of the wind?

BT: We created it together. Mihály chose some wind, together with the sound engineer, and they prepared something, and finally I decided what I wanted to hear. It was a very important thing – sometimes we hear the noises, sometimes we just hear the music without the noises, sometimes the music disappears and comes back in. It’s always moving and changing.

The wind [on screen] is created artificially, of course – we did it with very old wind machines, 60 years old, very primitive and ugly and heavy. It was very important to feel that it’s real – then when you see it, you feel it’s not real and then you have a feeling again, maybe it is real. We’re always playing with it. What is happening is always the same, the same monotony and repetition are always coming back – but always in a different way.

JR: The imagery reminded me of the photography of August Sander. Did you use period photos for reference?

BT: We did when we built the house – we looked

at houses in Turin, the Alps, Hungary and we combined them. We looked at photos for the costumes, the gypsies' clothes. And we looked at some French, German, Italian pictures for the props. But in the end, Agnes chose all the props – she went to the flea market in the country, near the Romanian border, and she bought everything in one day.

JR: How did you work this time with DP Fred Kelemen (see sidebar)?

BT: It's quite easy, because Fred knows me well. He was my student when he started film school. We've known each other for more than 20 years. He knows me, he knows my manias, he knows how strict I am, he knows I'm a perfectionist and terribly autocratic.

JR: How much Nietzsche is there really in the film?

BT: When we did it, we didn't speak about Nietzsche. Of course I have nearly all Nietzsche's work. I know his theory, and that the main issue is, "God is dead." There we agree. A French journalist said to me, "This film looks like a Bible." I said, "Yes, but without God."

JR: Are you an admirer of Beckett too?

BT: Maybe a little, yes.

JR: This film seems darker than his work. Beckett always offers some hope, but this seems to offer none.

BT: Yesterday somebody told me, OK, maybe everything is hopeless, but he got a lot of hope from the movie – he became stronger after he saw it. I want to get this reaction. You know what I want? You have to resist. You have to resist, against *me*. If you do, I'm glad.

JR: Does that idea hold any political resonance?

BT: No, I don't want to speak about the political

'Of course I know Nietzsche's theory, and that the main issue is "God is dead." There we agree'

– I never did. It's not a political question – our problem is much deeper than the political situation. The political situation is just rubbish, shitty things, daily stuff.

JR: Are you serious that this will be your last film?

BT: After this movie, why do you ask me?

JR: You could always start making comedies, like Miklós Jancsó (the veteran Hungarian director who is a favourite of Tarr's).

BT: Jancsó waited ten years before he started making comedies. Maybe in ten years – but I'm 100 per cent sure. Now I will do my teaching – I'm teaching a Kafka workshop in Berlin.

JR: Do you enjoy teaching?

BT: You know what disturbs me about teaching? I'm always forcing the students, "Please, be more radical and more revolutionary than me" – and they're not! They are fresh, they are young, they have to be more radical than me – that's my problem. They want to integrate, they don't want to change society. I want to change society – fuck!

THE LAST DANCE

Fred Kelemen – DP on Béla Tarr's *'The Turin Horse'* and *'The Man from London'*, and director in his own right of films including *'Frost'* and *'Abendland'* – describes the essence of his collaboration with the great Hungarian auteur

The friendship between me and Béla Tarr began with a glance.

Béla had come to Berlin because a retrospective of his films was being presented at the Arsenal cinema. We sat by chance, not knowing each other, in the same café at different tables, but we noticed each other and our glances met. A few days later we saw each other by chance again in the office of the Berlin film academy (dffb). We spoke with each other. That was the beginning of our acquaintance, which became a friendship and a working partnership. This first moment is now 22 years ago and a long road led us to the last film *The Turin Horse*.

During these 22 years there were more glances than words. Even while shooting, days would go by without us exchanging many words; our work together during the shooting was often silent for hours at a time. In this silence lies a knowledge of something we share, which connects us – of an attitude, a tacit agreement, a synchronous heartbeat, which we pursue in a secret pact, which is more secretive than we can imagine.

Thus the silence also unfolds in the films, driven on by a heartbeat that is connected in harmony with the silence of a world that knows that nothing happens but the passing of time and the struggle of people to counter this passing, to avoid perishing in the elapsing of time. In vain. But this struggle brings out the most beautiful and the ugliest in people; their creativity and their despair, their glow – shrill, gruesome, violent and soft, healing, preserving. This struggle gives people life, although they still have to float struggling down the river of time and disappear into that black hole, into which everything temporal sinks.

Béla's films don't announce any visions. They describe a being. They articulate a progression into the abyss. Béla's films are a dance of disappearance.

Béla is no mystic. He's a demystifier, an anti-mystic. Driven by this heartbeat, which is the echo of the world of disappearance, he shatters the myths of nationalism, capitalism, world-view absolutism, which surround us as political, economical, religious ideologies and rob us of the sight of a freer, wider plane. The myths of a world that wants to know nothing of the sound of silence, which the flow of time creates – that noise which dwells as stillness in every tone, which forms as darkness the canvas for the light, which prepares as death the ground from which life awakes and in which it takes root.

But me and Béla want to know something about the murmuring of being – that darkness and stillness, and that ground, from which everything comes and into which everything



ALL IN A GLANCE 'Turin Horse' DP Fred Kelemen

reverts. We want to investigate it, to tear holes in the illusionary fabric of our artificial civilisation, to create circulatory passages where this reality – which is hidden behind it like a skeleton in flesh – can flow through and thus manifest itself to us.

Unlike in Andrei Tarkovsky's movies, time in Béla's movies is not metaphysical; time in Béla's films is existential. It has to be endured.

The yearning for the beauty, for the clarity, symmetry and compositional equilibrium of the images is possibly the counterpart and expression of a wound torn open by a decrepit and disintegrated world, which is staggering unsteadily towards its disappearance, like the only real heroes – the only ones we can believe – who, befuddled, clueless, driven by despair, walk paths their whole life long that lead to nowhere else as the starting point, the primordial ground, to this silence, this darkness, from which all paths come and to which they all lead.

And because this can't be changed, Sisyphus's hoarse laugh sometimes rings out to us from Béla's films.

And so, this caravan of all the heroes from Béla's films trudges into this black hole at the end of *The Turin Horse*, in that the two characters of this last film disappear after the last flicker of their inner light, when all light has been extinguished; and all films with them.

Thus ends our last film, whose every sequence, every image I also shot as a part of my visual farewell tune for Béla, like our first encounter with a glance: it leads into blackness, into silence. The future is black smoke.

Translated by Phil Cooksey

■ *'The Turin Horse'* is released on 1 June, and is reviewed on page 78

Famed above all for his six-film collaboration with Luis Buñuel, the legendary French screenwriter Jean-Claude Carrière recently turned 80. Now the subject of a documentary, he discusses the secrets of his craft with **Nick James**

TRAVELLING LIGHT

SERVANT OF TWO MASTERS
Carrière as he is today, opposite, and with his long-term collaborators Peter Brook, below, and Luis Buñuel, bottom



The interview below took place at the San Sebastian Film Festival last year under delightfully casual circumstances. Publicists had asked me if I'd like to talk to Jean-Claude Carrière because he was the subject of a Mexican documentary being shown at the festival: *Carrière 250 metros*, directed by Juan Carlos Rulfo. I jumped at the chance because the screenwriter of Buñuel's *The Diary of a Chambermaid*, *Belle de Jour* and *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (not to mention such arthouse milestones as *The Tin Drum*, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* and *Cyrano de Bergerac*) had been a figure of some fascination to me for years.

I expected to have to restrict myself to the film in hand – a charming, discursive ramble around Carrière's principal preoccupations that's well worth catching. But as it turned out Carrière, who was celebrating his 80th birthday that very day, was in an expansive mood (and having met him, I can imagine he usually is), which meant that we left the film to range far and wide through the realms of his experience. Like all the best storytellers, the man himself is easy to listen to, with a soft, caressing voice that's used to tugging at our interest in several languages.

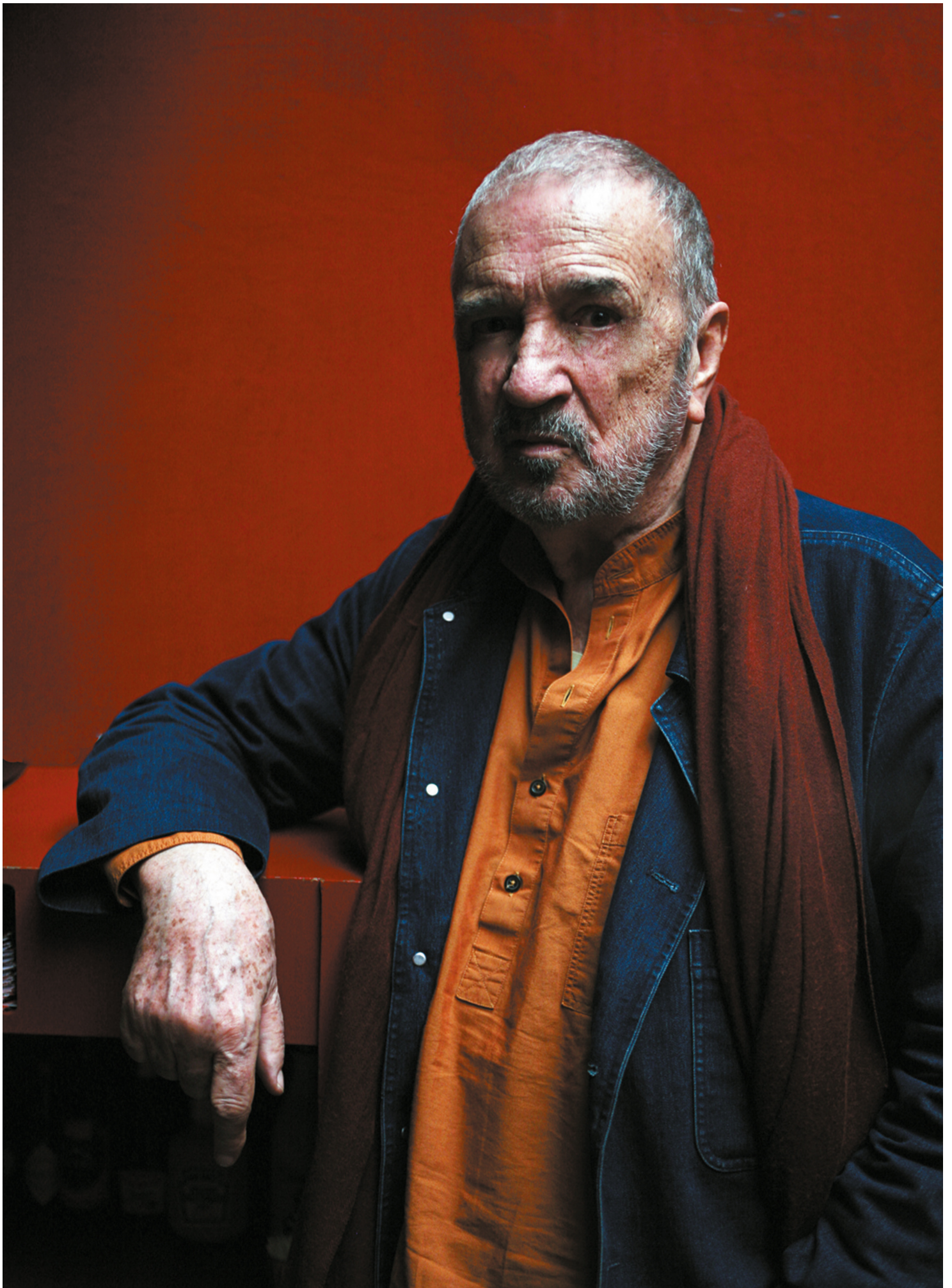
Nick James: Let's begin with the documentary about you, *'Carrière 250 metros'*.

Jean-Claude Carrière: The film was not my idea. It was my friend from Mexico, Natalia Gil Torné, who decided to make a film about me. I found it quite strange to make a film about a screenwriter. It's never happened before, so [the problem was] how could we do it? Natalia asked Juan Carlos Rulfo, a very good documentary-maker, to make the film with her. Juan Carlos got the idea to go from one country to another, without insisting on the country itself. For instance, Iran – where we couldn't shoot – is just a suggestion of Iran. It was quite important because my wife is from Iran and I go there often. I work in Iran, and have a lot of friends there, but we couldn't film in complete freedom, so Iran is Eden in the film, taken from here and there.

NJ: One thing I found interesting was the way the film talks about the rituals there have been in your life.

J-CC: There are two different feelings in the film. One is the fact that when you put your foot on a foreign country, it's not a foreign country any more. As soon as I arrive in India or Mexico or South Africa, I am in my country. That's one of the secrets of my life. The other feeling is about what it means to be a traveller. Many people say, "I've been to Taipei a month ago" – and it doesn't mean a thing. So many people put the camera between the world and themselves, it's like, "I paid for my camera to take a beautiful trip to India, but I wasn't there." I've seen this so many times that I asked myself about what it means to travel, and one day San Juan de la Cruz, the Spanish mystic, gave me the answer. He wrote a beautiful phrase in a letter to Saint Teresa: "We do not travel to see but *not* to see." We travel not to see things but to find ourselves in where we go. The traveller is always the traveller and what he finds, wherever he goes, is a mirror.

With Peter Brook a long time ago, we did a beautiful adaptation for the theatre of the Sufi poem *The Conference of the Birds*. In the poem all the birds in the world go for a trip to reach the Simorgh, their mythical king, and the trip is long ➤



Jean-Claude Carrière

◀ and very difficult. Some of them die, some give up and go back. Finally they arrive exhausted and there is no king – there is only a lake that's like a mirror. They see themselves and realise that they themselves are the king. It's a beautiful thing.

My wife and I do *The Conference of the Birds* in French villages, with one or two musicians, just for 100 to 150 people, and after the show – which lasts for just an hour – we talk about it, and always that feeling of what it means to be a stranger, a foreigner, comes up.

NJ: There are two very famous directors in particular with whom you've worked, Luis Buñuel and Peter Brook. Are there similarities between them?

J-CC: As a matter of fact there are three. The first is a double person: Jacques Tati and Pierre Etaix [who directed Carrière's first feature script, *The Sutor/Le Soupissant* in 1962]. Together they took me in and introduced me to another world that I didn't know anything about. Therefore I owe them a lot.

The second was Buñuel who was, when I met him in 1963, a monument in the history of cinema. He had won many awards, but he worked with me as if he was a beginner. He asked me – through the producer – to oppose him from time to time, to say, “No, Mr Buñuel, this is not good.” I remember once he said in one phrase, “I have a good idea. Bad.” At that speed. We worked together for 20 years alone, the two of us. That sort of concentration is extremely useful.

With Peter [Brook] it's different. Peter is not an author, he is a brook – a small river that goes from one ground to another, fertilising everything. He's not a scholar – he has no theory – but he has such an intuition, such an intelligence. What he taught me before anything was not to obey any rule, and to never stop working.

Working with Peter is my longest collaboration – 34 years. It took me into adventures, like *The Mahabharata* in India, that I would never have thought possible in my life. [Carrière worked on Brook's nine-hour 1985 stage adaptation of the Sanskrit epic, and on the 1989 TV and film adaptations.] Peter is the kind of man who arrives – he did it once, at my place – with a little bag. He said, “Listen, I'm going to Delhi next Thursday. Are you coming?” How can you say no?

He's still around, and every time we meet we have a lot to say to each other. When I came back from working with the Dalai Lama [with whom Carrière co-wrote the 1996 book *The Power of Buddhism*], the first person to call was Peter: “So how was it?” He's extremely curious about everything. He sees a lot of films. When we were working on *The Mahabharata* we watched a lot of Hong Kong kung-fu films, and in one of these we saw a wonderful idea that we couldn't do on stage: two old men are fighting with swords and they are both invincible and all of a sudden the two swords go into the air and they keep fighting.

Peter is an extraordinary character. He doesn't care about his glory, his fame, his money. He's not a rich man at all, and he's still working.

The similarities [between these men] are in the quality of the work. They don't forgive anything. When you work with Peter Brook or Buñuel, you are at the final of the Olympic Games. You are obliged to give everything without masking



MURDER IN MIND
Carrière cites this scene in Jean Renoir's 1931 'La Chienne' as a masterclass in the use of film language

anything, because they know. When you have the eyes of Buñuel on you eight hours a day, how can you hide anything? So you have to be in a good shape, not work on anything else, be totally concentrated, forget about your family, wife and/or lovers.

We went to Mexico or to Spain – always to remote places, small hotels far from the cities, and the only link was the newspapers every day. We read the newspapers just to find ideas, and I remember in one of the French newspapers we found that a bomb had been planted in the Sacré Coeur in Montmartre in Paris. The following day we rushed to buy the newspaper, but there was not a word about what we wanted to know: who had planted the bomb and why – not a word. Buñuel said that information is like a big fish: every day it swallows the day before. That's why in *That Obscure Object of Desire* [1977] we had a group of terrorists named after the baby Jesus.

NJ: One of my favourite ideas is the one where you and Buñuel told each other a new story every day.

J-CC: That was one of the rules. Just to prove to ourselves what we said once in an interview: that the human imagination is a muscle that can be trained and developed. So every night, after the script work – three hours in the morning, three hours in the afternoon, and then half an hour in our rooms, alone – we have the obligation to find a story, brief or long, related to the script or not. It's one thing to have an idea, but the other thing is to tell it as if it were a film, not a novel – it's totally different. And then we'd meet in the bar – the sacred bar – to tell each other the story.

We did it for 20 years almost every day we worked together, and I don't know how many stories crossed the paths where we were. I remember he would usually arrive at the bar before me, and he'd be in an armchair, and I'd arrive and he'd look in a way that meant, “My idea is not good at all.” Either “I have nothing” or “It's nothing worth saying”. And from time to time he would go, “I have a good one.”

NJ: The key thing is what you said about telling the story in film language.

J-CC: So now we enter a very unknown land. After more than 100 years of cinema, people don't yet know that to make a film you have to know film language. It's a very peculiar world that has little to do with literature and theatre. It's very difficult to explain, even to young students, that to enter a film school they have to learn a new language as if they were learning Chinese.

NJ: How do you approach that problem?

J-CC: The difficulty is that film language is made of many totally different elements. For instance, you have to know about the image, the frame, how to go from one frame to the other, the direction of the look, how there is a space that belongs to the film. There are a lot of technical, almost geometric laws you must know absolutely – the lens, everything. Second, how to use sound. People do not realise that cinema has invented the whisper. It's impossible in the theatre, but the fact that you can speak in a whisper in a film is something that really belongs to that language. Silence is also part of the language – and I don't mean the silence of the silent era. Silence [in cinema] was born in the 1930s when the talkies appeared. It never happened in the theatre.

Another thing is, put it this way: a woman enters a room, you follow her, she combs her hair, then she opens the drawer and puts in the comb and closes the drawer. If I keep my camera like this [in mid-shot], it's very banal, but if I have a close-up just when she opens the drawer and I see a gun inside, it changes everything. By showing the gun, you put the audience in your confidence.

Another part of the language is acting. Every time we write a scene where you want to express a certain relationship between two people – ambiguity, violence, anything – the first question to ask is: “Is it possible to act this without saying a word? If not, I'll be obliged to add some lines to the dialogue.” So you must have an excellent relationship with the actors.

And it also depends on the actors. When you work with Depardieu, for instance, you can ask him things that you cannot ask any other actor. For *Cyrano de Bergerac* [1990], before beginning the work of adaptation of the play, we asked Depardieu to record a cassette of the whole play alone in his house, playing all the parts, including the women. So we had his presence with us when we were working. From time to time we would check the cassette and ask, “How did he read that scene? How did he feel?” He was like a co-writer, almost, because Depardieu has a monumental body – more and more monumental – but a very fragile voice which was going in exactly the direction we wanted to go, almost fearing women, almost afraid of touching Roxane. So you have to know a lot about acting and the evolution of acting.

NJ: How do you start explaining all this to students?

J-CC: Two or three times a year I direct workshops, but the students already know something about cinema. We gather in a circle and I ask one or two of them together to give us the very beginning of a story: a desire and an obstacle to that desire – an obstacle, if possible, as strong as the desire. Then we start working together. It's very practical, no

theory at all. When we come to do a scene with a gun, I stop and explain how to put such an object in the film – how to allow the possibility for death to enter a story through just an image.

I'll give you an example: in Jean Renoir's *La Chienne* [1931], a woman is lying on a bed reading a book. She has a paperknife made of steel and she's cutting the pages – as we used to do. A man enters, seething with jealousy, and we know that she has been unfaithful to him. She puts the book on the bed and the scene between the two of them begins with the man becoming more and more angry. Then Jean Renoir forgets about the two of them. There's a close-up of the book with a small light on the steel cutter. That's a masterpiece. It's a question of putting the audience in your pocket, and of giving the audience your eyes – and then the death is there and finally he takes the knife and stabs her. That's one very classical example, and there are many others like this.

Many different feelings can be introduced just through an object. It's absolutely impossible to do that in a theatre, because you can't have a close-up. That is why so many novelists fail when they make a film. To me it's a surprise when I see a film by a novelist – a very famous and a good one who I admire as a novelist – and he makes a film using a language that he doesn't know anything about. So he puts the camera anywhere, and you can feel this immediately. The only essential thing that is absolutely necessary for any beginner – or even for me at my age – is to work as an editor in the editing room. To see how you put a film together.

NJ: David Hare talks about a double process: a stripping down to the leanest elements and then an opening up of the script for the collaborators.

J-CC: I call them waves. There is a wave of exploration: you open yourself up and let everything come in, and then there's another wave where you go back and see what's left on the sand by the ocean, and again and again. Another way to work is that when you tell a story, you arrive at a certain point and you become a spectator. You ask, "What would I like to see now? What could surprise me?" The other way is to enter the film: "I am one of the characters, what would I do now? How would I react?" This coming and going from the outside to the inside of the story is always extremely interesting.

NJ: When you look back over your career, do you feel like a lucky man?

J-CC: I'm extremely surprised that I'm 80 – as everybody knows because it's in the papers, so it must be true. And young people want to work with me, which is unheard of – 30- or 35-year-old directors who are quite famous. [In 2004, for instance, Carrière scripted *Birth* for the British director Jonathan Glazer, 34 years his junior.] I can't say no. I was very lucky to be working with Buñuel, who was 30 years older than me, and now with directors who are 30 years younger. That's absolutely marvellous.

■ A retrospective of Jean-Claude Carrière's films plays at BFI Southbank, London, throughout July. The documentary 'Carrière 250 metros' plays on 4 July – followed by a Q&A with Carrière – and 12 July. 'The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie' is rereleased on 29 June



RONALD GRANT ARCHIVE (OVERALL COLLECTION) © BFI STILLS, POSTERS AND DESIGNS (C)

“On ‘Cyrano’, before beginning the work of adaptation, we asked Depardieu to record a cassette of the whole play. So we had his presence with us when we were working”

RITUALS

'That Obscure Object of Desire', left, was the last product of his collaboration with Buñuel; right, Brook's 'The Mahabharata'





In a unique collaboration, Paul Laverty has now written ten features for Ken Loach. **Thomas Dawson** talks to the writer on the set of the latest, *'The Angels' Share'*

ON THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS

Writing, Ken Loach has said, is “the most important act in the whole process of filmmaking”, so it’s no surprise that throughout his decades-long career in television and film he has developed strong working relationships with his writers. Following valuable associations with Barry Hines (*Kes*, *The Price of Coal*, *Looks and Smiles*) and the late Jim Allen, (*Days of Hope*, *Raining Stones*, *Land and Freedom*), Loach in recent times has collaborated almost exclusively with the Scottish writer Paul Laverty, who has now written ten features for him, including the latest, *The Angels’ Share*.

There has always been an impressive diversity to Laverty’s scripts; he’s a writer who’s able to move freely between different countries (Nicaragua in 1996’s *Carla’s Song*, West Coast America in 2000’s *Bread and Roses*, Iraq in 2010’s *Route Irish*) and historical periods (the 1920s Irish War of Independence in 2006’s Palme d’Or-winning *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, 1973 Chile for Loach’s contribution to the portmanteau film *11’09”01 September 11*). But Laverty and Loach’s latest film

The Angels’ Share is set closer to home. It’s a bitter-sweet comic fable about an unemployed young Glaswegian father named Robbie (Paul Brannigan) who’s serving a community order for a violent attack on an innocent passer-by. Desperate to rebuild his life, he and three pals devise a scheme that involves stealing very expensive malt whisky from a rare cask being auctioned in the Highlands. (The ‘angels’ share’ of the title refers to the percentage of the spirit that disappears in the cask during the evaporation process.)

Born in Calcutta in 1957, to an Irish mother and Scottish father, the Madrid-based Laverty took an unusual path to the screenwriting profession. As a teenager he studied to be a priest in Rome, before switching to a philosophy degree and then training as a lawyer in Scotland. He spent several years in Nicaragua during the mid-1980s, working for human-rights organisations while the US-backed Contra rebels were waging a campaign of terror against Sandinista supporters. His first-hand experiences of Central America fed into his first screenplay for Loach, *Carla’s Song*, in which Robert Carlyle’s apolitical Glaswegian bus driver travels to Managua with a traumatised Nicara-

guan woman. Loach has talked of how Laverty’s writing “has fitted me like a glove. It goes back to when I was doing television, when the writer was king. You went to where the writer wrote, to where they were specific.”

I visited the set of *The Angels’ Share* on an early summer’s day last year, when the film’s climactic auction scene was being filmed at the Balblair whisky distillery near Nairn. It was immediately apparent that Laverty is not a subscriber to David Mamet’s maxim that for a writer to attend the filming of his own script is comparable to a father pitching up on his daughter’s honeymoon. As Loach prepared for a take by gently encouraging the assembled extras (with echoes of *Dad’s Army*’s John Le Mesurier as the director ever so politely asked, “Would you mind awfully falling in?”), I spotted the wiry Laverty having a quick word in the ears of the kilt-wearing quartet of youngsters – the actors playing Robbie and his mates – observing the auction from behind a pillar.

Later, over a beer in a nearby hotel bar, Laverty explains to me the immersive research that goes into all his scripts for Loach. “A good issue does not necessarily make a good film,” he insists. “I

always need a character with a lot of contradictions, because that gives me the energy to go to unexpected places, and I try to see the world from the point of view of that character. I tend not to write with any particular actor in mind, as I like to follow the character wherever they might go. You have all these screenwriting manuals by people like Robert McKee which tell you to write 250 pages and then whittle everything down. But for me it's important not to know where I'm going with the script – to allow for surprises – otherwise I find it becomes very antiseptic and clinical."

So how, I ask, did Lavery come up with the idea of linking the character of Robbie to a plotline involving the search for the perfect whisky? "Actually, doing something about whisky has been kicking around in my head for quite a long time," he replies. "There's the commercial element – that a bottle can be sold for £100,000. There's the mystical side, with the possibility of coming up with a magical amount from a special barrel. I also loved the idea that the kids in the film know nothing about their national drink. They've never been to the countryside and so they are stepping into new territory. By learning that the nose is an incredibly delicate instrument, they are learning how to appreciate a drink, rather than just seeing alcohol as a way to get hammered. The stuff about the whisky allowed me to combine these different elements in a comic fashion."

To research *The Angels' Share*, Lavery spent time talking to teenagers in gangs, community and social workers, and police officers. It was during this period that he first encountered Paul Brannigan, a former young offender who'd spent a year in jail for a firearms offence, and was then organising Friday-night football matches for teenagers in Glasgow.

"I met up with him and some of the kids he worked with at a community hall, and he struck me as a remarkable character, but one who had a chaotic past," Lavery recalls. "Because of his criminal record and the scar on his face, even the Army wouldn't accept him. But he was really smart. He listened and he had a great presence." Brannigan ducked out of the first set of auditions for the film, but Lavery persevered. "I managed to track him down, and we had a friendly chat," he recalls. "I told him, 'You have something. Just give yourself a chance.' I'm glad he did. In a sense, the story in *The Angels' Share* is all about giving somebody a second chance."

In Lavery and Loach's most satisfying work such as *My Name Is Joe* (1998) and *Sweet Sixteen* (2002), a relatively simple human story is used to illustrate something much wider about how social and economic forces impact on people's lives. *The Angels' Share* uses a comic fable to throw light on the phenomenon of youth unemployment that's currently afflicting the Western world. "You have to remember, though, that for every Robbie – for whom things work out – there are loads of young people everywhere in the world who will never find meaningful work," says Lavery. "In my experience young people are desperate to work. Imagine growing up in a community where you may never, ever work. Imagine what that does to your sense of self."

Two weeks before the UK release of *The Angels' Share*, another Lavery-scripted film is opening in British cinemas. Directed by his Spanish wife Icíar Bollaín (who as a young actress appeared



ON THE ROCKS
In *'The Angels' Share'*, opposite and above, Paul Lavery and Ken Loach use a story of stolen whisky to address the issue of long-term youth unemployment

in Loach's 1994 *Land and Freedom*) and dedicated to the radical American historian Howard Zinn (author of *The People's History of America*), *Even the Rain* is Lavery's most ambitious and multilayered screenplay to date. He began writing it over a decade ago, at one point developing it with Mexican director Alejandro González Iñárritu.

Originally Lavery intended to write a historical screenplay telling the story of Christopher Columbus's 'conquest' of the Americas, and the resistance both from the local indigenous population and from the Catholic priests of conscience Bartolomé de las Cascas and Antonio de Montesinos, who dared to criticise the atrocities carried out by the supposedly 'civilised' colonisers. "I wasn't happy with the script," Lavery confesses. "The historical story felt very distant – I wanted to make it more immediate. I came up with the idea of a story about an idealistic film director [played by Gael García Bernal] and his cynical producer [Luis Tosar] making a film about Columbus, and getting caught up in the Bolivian Water War in Cochabamba in 2000."

Lavery and Bollaín travelled to Bolivia and interviewed those who had resisted the govern-

'They are learning how to appreciate a drink, rather than just seeing alcohol as a way to get hammered'



ment's attempted privatisation of the water supply – a course of action recommended by the IMF. "These people showed me the barriers they had erected," Lavery remembers. "They had dug seven kilometres of trenches in their protests. I couldn't help but notice the parallels between the multinational corporations and Columbus. Once again the indigenous population are resisting with sticks and stones, and are being chased by dogs. This time rather than gold and slavery, it's about water."

"It was a difficult script to weave in and out," he continues. "The problem with having these three different narrative strands is that you still have to develop the two main characters, and you have limited time. You have to imply lots of things. Obviously I would have loved to tell the story from the perspective of the Indian leader Daniel [Juan Carlos Aduviri] – it's just we would never have been given the money by the financiers."

Lavery's deconstruction of the Columbus myth should meet with an interesting reaction in the US, where Columbus Day is celebrated annually in October. But Lavery doesn't seem like a man to be easily fazed. When *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* was released in 2006, Dominic Lawson writing in *The Independent* fulminated that the film was "a hard-line Marxist distortion of history". The then shadow cabinet minister, now Education Secretary Michael Gove – without actually having seen the film – pronounced that it had glamorised the IRA.

The likes of Loach and Lavery will always be criticised for making 'political' films – as though the products of what Horkheimer and Adorno referred to as "the culture industry" are somehow ideologically neutral. Amidst the political timidity of contemporary UK cinema, where the evasive *The Iron Lady* is defended by its director on the grounds that it allegedly offers a Shakespearean account of power, Loach and Lavery stand out as not remotely interested in the trap of 'neutrality'. For that – and for their compassionate commitment to conveying the experiences and "interesting contradictions" of those marginalised in our unequal society – they should be commended.

■ *'Even the Rain'* is released on 18 May, and is reviewed on page 61. *'The Angels' Share'* is released on 1 June, and is reviewed on page 54



NEW TERRITORY
In addition to his work with Loach, Lavery, left, has written the Bolivian-set film *'Even the Rain'*, above, for his wife, the Spanish director Icíar Bollaín

A year on from the upheavals of the Arab Spring, **Ali Jaafar** examines the implications of political change for the new generation of filmmakers emerging in the Middle East

SPRING AWAKENING

After spring, eventually winter must come. The uprisings that convulsed the Arab world for much of last year led many to hope that a new era of artistic freedom and opportunity had finally arrived. The revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt were, in large part, driven by the youth of both countries. Technologically savvy students and young professionals had seemingly – via Twitter, Facebook and other forms of social media – found a digital solution to the analogue modes of suppression employed by the incumbent autocratic regimes. The pen, or rather the mobile phone, was proving mightier than the sword as we witnessed the democratisation and reclamation of the moving image by citizen-documentarians bearing witness to the epochal changes around them.

In Egypt, home to the Arab world's oldest and most enduring cinema industry, the film community constituted a significant presence in Tahrir Square. They were on hand to document and participate in the heady events that saw Hosni Mubarak's 30-year-presidency swept away in 18 days. The activist filmmakers – a camera in one hand, stones and stretchers in the other – celebrated alongside their fellow protestors the promise of a new dawn of greater cultural and political openness.

The country's film business, so long stifled by tepid commercial mediocrity, seemed to receive an immediate adrenaline shot. It would take only

three months for the first feature-length offering about the revolution to emerge: the portmanteau *18 Days*. A collection of short films from ten of Egypt's most established and emerging directors, it was completed in time for a world premiere at the Cannes Film Festival in May last year. A feature-length documentary, *Tahrir 2011*, was completed in time to receive its world premiere at the Venice Film Festival in September.

"I have never felt more free artistically," says director Yousry Nasrallah, who recently completed his feature film *After the Battle*, a love story about a middle-class revolutionary girl and a working-class boy coerced into supporting the Mubarak regime. "Egypt is a different place now. I almost felt frighteningly free making this film. I've never had this experience before. I'm hoping it will upset everyone."

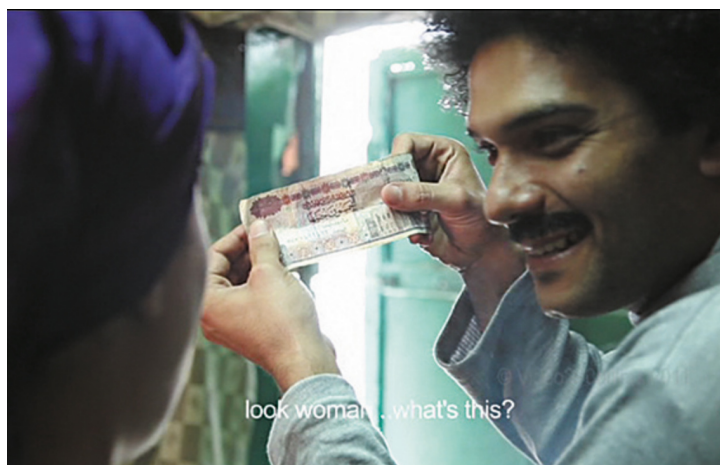
Recent developments across the region, however, have seen initial euphoria replaced by uncertainty and misgivings. The largely non-violent opposition movements in Tunisia and Egypt stand in stark contrast to the chaos and brutality in Bahrain, Libya and – most troubling of all – Syria. At the same time, the success of Islamists in parliamentary elections in Tunisia and Egypt has stoked fears that a rise in social conservatism may have a lasting negative impact on the creative industries in both countries. The first signs have not been encouraging.

In Tunisia, satellite channel Nessma TV's general manager Nabil Karaoui found himself the subject of a lawsuit and death threats from

radical Salafis, who accused him of blasphemy for broadcasting Iranian director Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*. Satrapi's film, an animated coming-of-age tale set against the backdrop of the 1979 Iranian revolution, perhaps touched too close to home with its wry mocking of the way in which Ayatollah Khomeini and his theocratic cohorts consolidated power and suffocated any semblance of dissent following the overthrow of the Shah.

In Egypt, the resurgent Muslim Brotherhood have given conflicting signals as to the direction they intend to take the country should they follow up their parliamentary success by prevailing in presidential elections in May this year. Legendary Egyptian actor and comedian Adel Imam is currently facing a three-month jail term after being found guilty in February of insulting Islam in a number of his films dating back to the mid-1990s, notably *Terrorism and Kebab* (*Al-irhab wal kabab*, 1992). The case was brought by Asran Mansour, a lawyer who reputedly has ties to Islamist groups. Also in February, Islamist students at Cairo's Ain Shams University temporarily halted filming of *Zaat*, a new TV drama from director Kamla Abu-Zekry (*One/Zero*), after protesting at the 'indecent' clothing of the actresses.

"Things are a lot more complicated now than they were with the old regime," says Egyptian producer Mohamed Hefzy. "The old regime screwed a lot of things up, and no one wants to see them return, but they did give us some lee-





Films such as 'Microphone' foretold the events of January and the frustrations of Egyptians

BEFORE AND AFTER

'Microphone', above, anticipated Egypt's revolution, while the portmanteau film '18 Days', below left to right, was the first cinematic response to the events



way when it came to filmmaking. Even though it's still early days, one has the feeling that there is more conservatism now and also possibly more censorship. There have been a lot more threats to the creative community, but it is important to note that the creative community is geared up for a fight if necessary. We're ready to fight back if we have to."

A new wave in Egypt

Mohamed Hefzy is one of the leading players in the new wave of Egyptian filmmakers to have emerged in recent years, alongside directors such as Ahmed Abdalla (*Microphone*); Mohamed Diab (*Cairo 678*); Kamla Abou Zekry (*One-Zero*); Ibrahim El-Batout (*Eye of the Sun*) and Amr Salama (*Asmaa*). Even before the revolution, these filmmakers had begun to challenge the status quo of the rigid commercial demands of the 'clean cinema' movement (a term referring to the bland school of cinema funded largely by Gulf-based satellite TV channels that forbid sex or violence), which had pervaded Egypt's film industry for much of the last two decades.

Instead, their films attempted to tackle head-on the social and political problems blighting Egypt. In many ways, films such as *Microphone* (2010) – a breathlessly *vérité* journey through Alexandria's underground music scene – foretold the events of 25 January and the deep-seated frustrations of Egyptians bubbling barely beneath the surface. Having fought for so long to achieve their freedom, these filmmakers are not likely to concede their ground easily.

In March Ahmad Abdalla – currently filming his latest feature *A Bed and a Cover*, about three days in the life of an escaped convict during the revolution – was banned by the Ministry of Religious Endowments from filming a scene in a mosque on the grounds that it would violate Islamic law. Within hours of that decision being announced, the Egyptian Creativity Front – a collective of artists and filmmakers formed on the anniversary of the revolution to guarantee the preservation of artistic freedoms in the country – rushed to his defence and denounced the decision. "Art has always been an ally to religion," read their statement, referring to several examples from history, including the Al-Hambra in Islamic Andalusia.

"There are givens now which everyone has to accept," says actor, writer and producer Khalid Abdalla (a familiar face in Western-backed films such as *The Kite Runner* and *United 93*). "Something has fundamentally changed. The seeds have been sown and it is only a question of how quickly will they grow. There's a resilience which, in many ways, is the birth child of the revolution. That is not going to go away. This state of refusal is how filmmakers here now identify themselves, and they're prepared to fight this out culturally."

Along with director Tamer El-Said, Khalid Abdalla has been working for more than two years on *In the Last Days of the City*, a feature film set in Cairo, Baghdad and Beirut. Originally intended to capture the frustrations of the lost generation of young people struggling to find their place under authoritarian rule in three

Cinema and the Arab Spring



iconic Arab cities, the project has since become imbued with a sense of prescience. El-Said began filming in a pre-revolution Cairo. By the time he had finished, months later, the city around him had transformed politically.

In the meantime, both Abdalla and El-Said have become enmeshed in Egypt's burgeoning post-revolution film scene. The duo helped launch Mosireen, an online moving-image archive of cultural material associated with the revolution and its aftermath, which soon became the most visited non-profit YouTube channel of all time. Its success is testament to the extent to which a generation of young Egyptians – and to a certain extent Arabs as a whole – now believe again in the power of the moving image, particularly after decades of being force-fed staid, state-controlled media and unchallenging cinema.

"You have a huge upsurge of people who had their first experience of filming something so real, who now know what it means to hold a camera and feel a direct relationship with their footage," says Khalid Abdalla. "For the last few months, fiction has seemed almost absurd compared to what they were seeing before their own eyes. Now that we're more than a year on, however, I believe the balance is shifting back to story. The most positive part of fiction is you don't always get what you see. You have to generate a story. The best is yet to come."

That sense of optimism, even if cautious, can be found in other circles across the Arab film world. With so much of the Arab uprisings captured on unverified, shaky, handheld devices – from the

STATE OF THE NATION

Clockwise from top left: films such as 'Tahrir 2011', 'One-Zero', 'After the Battle' and 'In the Last Days of the City' have taken advantage of new freedoms in Egypt

bloody demise of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi in Libya to the shocking scenes of violence still being sneaked out of Syria – audiences will eventually demand a more curatorial framework to digest and reflect the historic events that have engulfed their region.

"There are so many interesting stories out there waiting to be told," says Mohamed Hefzy. "It has undeniably inspired filmmakers. Even though actually getting your films financed today is harder because of the economy and political situation, in the long run you cannot stop creativity. We don't want Egypt to end up as a country like Iran."

Lessons from Iran

The reference to Iran is telling – and a common benchmark for Egyptian, and Arab, filmmakers seeking to contextualise the post-revolution path forward. The 1979 revolution in Iran saw a broad-

based opposition, both secular and religious, come together to topple the Shah's rule. Within months, however, the Mullahs – led by Ayatollah Khomeini – had succeeded in purging dissenting voices from the government and imposing a strict theocratic order that remains in place today.

The irony of those social and political constrictions is that Iranian cinema has flourished internationally thanks to directors such as Abbas Kiarostami, Jafar Panahi and the Makhmalbaf family. Admittedly, those filmmakers have succeeded in spite of, rather than because of, their government's involvement. Earlier this year Iran celebrated its first-ever victory at the Academy Awards with Asghar Farhadi's *A Separation* winning the Best Foreign Language Film award. Farhadi's acceptance speech, addressed to the Iranian people, was a highlight of the ceremony.

"At the time when talk of war, intimidation and aggression is exchanged between politicians," said Farhadi, "the name of their country Iran is spoken here through her glorious culture, a rich and ancient culture that has been hidden under the heavy dust of politics."

One ominous sign of the dangers facing Egypt's own filmmakers was the banning of a screening of Farhadi's masterful film at Cairo University in March after an outcry from Islamist Sunni students that the film propagated Shia and atheist ideals incompatible with their worldview. Even if the Egyptian Creativity Front did once again rush to the defence of a fellow filmmaker, the incident highlights just how precarious the road ahead remains.

One ominous sign of dangers facing Egypt's filmmakers was the banning of a screening of 'A Separation'

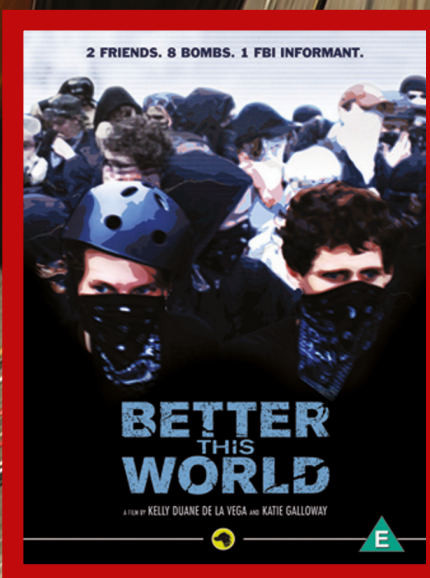
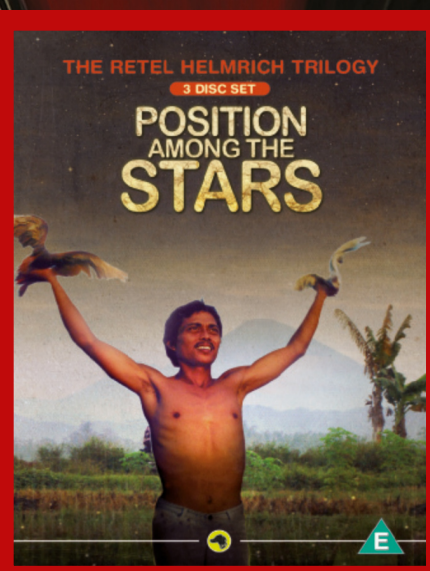
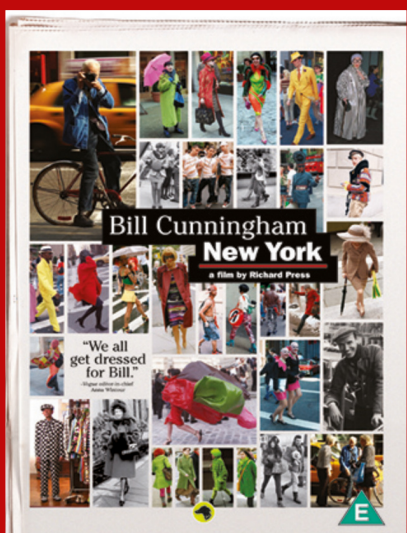
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.....
Woody Allen: A Documentary Clearly a diehard Allen devotee, Robert B. Weide may not prise his subject that far out of his shell but his film is still an excellent primer on Allen's work **p80**
.....

The last temptation

Winner of the Golden Lion at last year's Venice Film Festival, Alexander Sokurov's retelling of the Faust legend finally arrives on these shores. But it's not just the film's hero who's suffering from hubris, says **Tony Rayns**

Faust

Alexander Sokurov, 2011

The Faust legend – the story of a man of science who strikes a bargain with Mephistopheles to trade his eternal soul for a range of magical experiences, including sex and flying – first reached print in Germany in 1587, written by an unknown Lutheran. An English translation was published in London five years later; the playwright and spy Christopher Marlowe used it as the basis for his *Doctor Faustus*, staged in Shoreditch in 1593/4. Two centuries later, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe spent his entire working life preoccupied with the story: he began writing the first part of an epic verse-drama in 1773 (it was finally published in 1808, after numerous revisions) and completed the more metaphysical second part just before his death in 1832. Alexander Sokurov's version of the story, billed as a free adaptation of Goethe's play, draws mainly on the characters and incidents of Part One, although its dark ending offers a startling inversion of Part Two's transcendent finale. Sokurov comes to bury Goethe, not to praise him.

In fact Sokurov has yanked the story out of its original moral context and set it in a highly original context of his own: Faust, he says, culminates his "Tetralogy of Power" – which means that it has unexplained connections with his three features on 20th-century tyrants: *Moloch* (1999, on Hitler), *Taurus* (2001, on Lenin) and *The Sun (Solntse)* (2005, on Hirohito). This has not surprisingly provoked puzzlement since the film's triumph at last year's Venice Film Festival. *Faust* looks and sounds nothing like the three earlier films in the group, and there was nothing obviously Faust-like about Hitler, Lenin or Hirohito. Sokurov's smiling refusal to clarify his thinking (on display late last year in a Q&A at BFI Southbank) in effect challenges the viewer to solve a conundrum. It seems unlikely that many will muster the energy or will to tackle quizmaster Sokurov's riddle, but the following



Muller is a jovial grotesque straight out of Bosch or Brueghel: he swigs hemlock as a tonic and has little male genitalia where his arse should be

represents my best shot at untangling what's going on here.

The most immediately striking thing about this *Faust* is that Sokurov has junked the dynamic which powers most versions of the story: the bantering debate between Faust and the Devil. Goethe was happy to recognise these characters and their philosophical duelling as aspects of himself (he said so to Johann Peter Eckermann, as recorded in *Conversations with Goethe*), and virtually all other artists and commentators have similarly seen the clash between an ascetic melancholy and a worldly cynicism as the core of the story. Sokurov rethinks Faust as a driven and somewhat sadistic

materialist, beset with money worries, and Mephistopheles as the apparent answer to his problems: a moneylender.

Some have caught a whiff of Russian reflex anti-Semitism in the refashioning of the Devil as a pawnbroker named Muller, but Sokurov evidently had something more primal in mind. Muller, as played by the performance artist Anton Adasinskiy, is a jovial grotesque straight out of Bosch or Brueghel: he swigs hemlock as a tonic and, as revealed in a bath-house scene, has little male

BARGAINING POWER
In this version, Faust (Johannes Zeiler, opposite) sells his soul to a moneylender (Anton Adasinskiy, above) for a night with Margarete (Isolda Dychauk, below)



genitalia where his arse should be. Muller withholds money from Faust, but leads him astray in other ways, first goading him into carrying out a meaningless murder and then tempting him with the attractions of the murdered man's sister, a young woman who frets that she and her mother don't love each other. There's no sense that Muller has a strategy to corrupt Faust, or that Faust's rapid 'downfall' is anything but a lads'-night-out diversion from his scientific researches. This Faust signs away the soul he doesn't believe in for a single night with the colourless Margarete (Isolda Dychauk).

Since neither Faust nor Muller is given any strong motivation, their seeming aimlessness inflects the form and pace of the film, a teeming, grungy panorama of 18th-century German urban life which looks back to the late Middle Ages more than forward to the Enlightenment. There's no denying that Terry Gilliam got there first in his scatological, rat-swarming medieval frolics, but Gilliam always gives his characters strength and purpose. Sokurov's mobile camerawork and fast cutting (he's abetted by Bruno Delbonnel, also the cinematographer of *Amélie* and *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*) keep everything in movement almost all the time, but without clear direction. Backstory, characterisation and plot detail are all sacrificed to the constant stream of incident, with overworked production design and set decoration left to fill in the gaps.

The result is never less than a tough watch. To take one example from hundreds, the first time Faust hits the streets he's seen evading a mugging, at which point the camera pans rapidly to a big-close-up of a girl releasing a dove. Before anyone has the chance to reflect what the shot might mean (is there a metaphorical implication? a suggestion of poetic equivalence?), the film has rushed on to more random images of street life, now suddenly offset by a snatch of self-questioning voiceover from Faust of a kind not heard elsewhere. Surviving 139 minutes of this barrage of profuse



but elusive imagery and sound is something of an ordeal.

All of this is conspicuously unlike the languorous dream-worlds of *Moloch*, *Taurus* and *The Sun*, which hinted at their protagonists' inner lives through glimpses of their more or less banal domesticities. Here, Sokurov is barely concerned with Faust's inner life; the actor Johannes Zeiler, who plays him, simply has to move from repression to indulgence, and then on to some undefined but clearly power-hungry future. Perhaps this hollowness of character, underlined by the elisions in the plotting, is the secret key to the film's connection with the rest of the tetralogy.

Sokurov seems to believe that the will to power can be triggered almost accidentally, even if it springs from some existential inner 'darkness'. Faust, last seen striking out across Nietzschean wastes in defiance of an offscreen deity, is a man whose latent cruelty (once channelled into mistreatment of his servant Wagner) has been 'liberated' by acts of violence – a murder, a stoning and the taking of the woman who has best reason to hate him – so that a harsh landscape becomes new territory for him to conquer, and not a sign of his ruination. This makes him

the precise opposite of the father in Pasolini's *Theorem* – and of Hirohito; unlike the Japanese emperor, who was born 'divine' and had to learn how to be human, Faust is a man who wakes up to the testosterone of his own id. Of course, this represents a desecration of Goethe's *Faust*.

So why rethink the Faust legend as the vehicle for this cautionary tale? There are probably two reasons. One is Sokurov's characteristically hubristic sense of his own talents: having nailed Hitler and Lenin, not to mention the intensities of parent-child relationships and the essence of

Shostakovich, he's ready to press-gang one of Europe's dominant modern myths into his scheme of things. Oh, those Russians! The other is that *Faust* plays squarely to Sokurov's penchant for studies of maleness: male strengths and weaknesses, male sentiments and rivalries, male sensitivity and violence. The story here starts with a big close-up of a penis and scrotum (they belong to a corpse which Faust is dissecting) and wades through a fragmentary, dispersed narrative in which a man ultimately discovers his inner *Übermensch*, trampling on other men and women along the way.

The thought inevitably strikes that Sokurov might see himself as a Faust – until we reflect that Sokurov has less trouble with finance than almost any of his contemporaries, and certainly much less than his revered Tarkovsky once had. *Faust* was underwritten with \$11 million in subsidies from the Mass Media Development and Support Foundation and the Russian Cinema Fund – and there are photos of Sokurov receiving the cash from his friend Vladimir Putin to prove it. It's a scary thing, the will to power.

For credits and synopsis, see page 62

The power of unhappiness

Sokurov describes how 'Faust' completes his 'tetralogy of power'

'Faust' is the final instalment of my cinematic tetralogy on the nature of power. The main characters in the first three films are real historical figures: Hitler, Lenin and Emperor Hirohito. The symbolic image of Faust completes this series of great gamblers who lost the

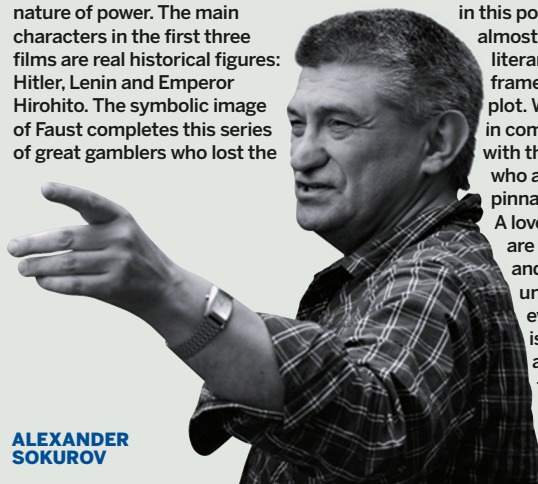
most important wagers of their lives.

Faust is seemingly out of place in this portrait gallery – an almost museumesque literary character framed by a simple plot. What does he have in common with these real figures who ascended to the pinnacle of power?

A love of words that are easy to believe, and pathological unhappiness in everyday life. Evil is reproducible, and Goethe formulated its essence:

"Unhappy people are dangerous."

ALEXANDER SOKUROV





Dirty thirties: Jason Biggs

American Pie: Reunion

USA/Japan 2012
Directors: Jon Hurwitz,
Hayden Schlossberg
Certificate 15 112m 47s

The poster for *Harold & Kumar Get the Munchies* (2004) billed John Cho as “that Asian Guy from *American Pie*” – part of the joke being that Cho, credited as “MILF Guy #2”, barely appeared in the film. But, much as the introduction of the word ‘MILF’ is among the first of *American Pie*’s few claims on posterity, Cho, who starred in two subsequent *Harold & Kumar* films as well as J.J. Abrams’s *Star Trek* (2009), became one of the few from the original cast to build a major movie career. Seann William Scott has done fine work in *Role Models* (2008) and elsewhere – frequently playing a version of his *American Pie* persona – but even Alyson Hannigan, a cult favourite from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, has largely been kept off the big screen.

The disillusionment that comes with age is, then, both text and subtext of *American Pie: Reunion*, but the latter is the more compelling. None of the original characters, now in their early thirties and back at high school for their 13th anniversary reunion (ah, the big one-three), has realised their yearbook vows to live life to the full; nor has Chris Klein justified the ‘Male Superstar of Tomorrow’ accolade he received from the Young Hollywood Awards in 2001.

Beside star pupils *10 Things I Hate About You* and *Election*, *American Pie* was the dunce of the class of 1999’s teen movies; and despite its transfer into the capable-ish hands of Jon Hurwitz and Hayden Schlossberg, writers of the *Harold & Kumar* films, *Reunion* looks similarly slow-witted next to this season’s other back-to-high-school premise, *21 Jump Street*. In that film two visitors from the foreign country of 2005 are baffled by a generation for whom – thanks to *Glee* – it’s cool to care. In *Reunion*, on the other hand, the youngsters with whom the

oldsters come into contact are cut from reassuringly samey cloth. (Hasn’t Ali Cobrin, who plays jailbait fantasy Kara, read about what became of her co-stars?)

American Pie’s large dollops of smut were relatively unusual in their time, regarded as a throwback to the age of *Porky*’s (1982); since then, however, a thousand raunchy comedies have bloomed, and *Reunion* merely keeps up with the competition. Hurwitz and Schlossberg have been unnecessarily faithful to the original trilogy, so that we get many minutes catching up with the unbelievably boring Kevin, played by the not notably charismatic Thomas Ian

Nicholas, and the completely nondescript Vicky, played by cautionary figure Tara Reid. They may have overestimated the extent to which the 1999 film and its sequels continue to grip the imagination of their first audience, now surely sated by films in which men in their thirties continue to act like teenagers.

Not all of it is terrible: though the script is unrelentingly coarse, Seann William Scott (Stifler), Jennifer Coolidge (Stifler’s mom), Jason Biggs (Jim) and Eugene Levy (Jim’s dad) can all sell a joke. John Cho’s almost sarcastic performance, meanwhile, gives the film a welcome spritz of self-awareness. ➡ **Henry K. Miller**

CREDITS

Produced by
Craig Perry
Warren Zide
Chris Moore
Adam Herz
Written by
Jon Hurwitz
Hayden Schlossberg
Based on characters
created by Adam Herz
**Director of
Photography**
Daryn Okada
Editor
Jeff Betancourt
Production Designer
William Arnold
Music
Lyle Workman
**Production Sound
Mixer**
Whit Norris

Costume Designer
Mona May

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production
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Dentsu Inc.
Executive Producers
Louis G. Friedman
Paul Weitz
Chris Weitz
Seann William Scott
Jason Biggs

CAST

Jason Biggs
Jim Levenstein
Chris Klein
Chris Oestreicher, ‘Oz’

Natasha Lyonne
Jessica
Thomas Ian Nicholas
Kevin
Tara Reid
Vicky
Mena Suvari
Heather
Eugene Levy
Jim’s dad
Alyson Hannigan
Michelle Levenstein
Seann William Scott
Steve Stifler
Eddie Kaye Thomas
Finch
John Cho
MILF guy 2
Jennifer Coolidge
Stifler’s mom
Dania Ramirez
Selena
Ali Cobrin
Kara

Chuck Hittinger
AJ
Katrina Bowden
Mia

**Dolby Digital/
Datasat/SDDS**
Colour by
DeLuxe
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Universal Pictures
International UK & Eire

10,150 ft +8 frames

US theatrical title
American Reunion

SYNOPSIS

The class of 1999 returns to East Great Falls for a high-school reunion. Jim and Michelle feel that the fire has gone out of their marriage. Kevin, also married and similarly bored, wonders what life might have been like with his old flame Vicky. Oz, now a successful TV presenter, dislikes trophy girlfriend Mia, and pines for old flame Heather. Finch claims to lead an adventurous, globetrotting life. Stifler is an office temp, and has barely changed in the 13 years since the friends were at school together. Michelle’s friend Selena, once an ugly duckling, is now a beautiful bartender; she and Finch are attracted to each other.

Jim is propositioned by Kara, the next-door neighbour he used to babysit, now grown into an attractive 17-year-old, but he reluctantly turns her down. Stifler drags everyone into a feud with Kara’s boyfriend AJ after stealing Mia’s bikini top. At a party at Stifler’s house, Jim and Michelle get into an argument about Kara, Jim’s father hooks up with Stifler’s mother, and Oz and Heather reveal their feelings for one another. The gang briefly abandon Stifler, but allow him back into the fold in time for the reunion dance.

Jim and Michelle make up. Finch admits to Selena that he isn’t really a globetrotter, but she doesn’t mind. Kevin and Vicky agree to move on with their lives.

The Angels’ Share

United Kingdom/France/Italy 2012
Director: Ken Loach

Director Ken Loach himself compares this likeable confection to his 1969 film *Kes*, and it’s a good place to start. Both have protagonists extricating themselves from chaotic and bleak futures when unexpected interests reveal equally unexpected talents, allowing them to transform themselves and their worlds. In both films, these interests are very much *not* coded ‘working class’: in *Kes* it was falconry, that half-forgotten leisure activity of the medieval aristocracy; here it’s the informed appreciation of luxury whiskies. And both characters are played by working-class non-actors, themselves encouraged by Loach to pass through into a very different context for themselves, if they choose it.

This makes *The Angels’ Share* sound pious. Actually it’s a heist comedy: an ill-assorted gaggle of merrie ne’er-do-wells devise and execute a Robin Hood plan to siphon off some fancy whisky from the very wealthy and give the proceeds to the poor, namely themselves. But while Loach is as happy as we are to see the rich cheated a little, he also has a fascinated realist’s eye for the craft-world of whisky-making and its attendant expertise, its traditions and characters – such as Master of the Quaich Rory McAllister (Charlie MacLean, essentially playing himself) – and the specific ambience of a tasting or distillery. It’s actually the gleaming vats and whispery large-roomed sound of this last, rather than the taste or smell of the product, that first captivate Robbie (Paul Brannigan), a young father-to-be doing 300 hours community service for assault.

The film’s title is a distiller’s term for the percentage of the whisky that vaporises as it matures in the cask. There’s a glint here of the 19th-century socialist William Morris’s admiration for things well made and the joy in them for the maker, a radical alternative to the factory system. Certainly the siphon-job robbery is no cinematic precision machinery; it’s small-scale and simple, a craft heist, in fact, requiring a length of tubing, four empty bottles of Irn-Bru and a text sent from a mobile. Nor is this a crack team of super-skilled villains, just Robbie’s amiable loser chums from his community-service grind. No lifelike rubberoid masks for disguise, even, just kilts.

Certainly there’s a fairytale element to this story, but it’s not in the amazing compensatory eloquence of raggedy antiheroes. Even leader Robbie blends guarded quizzical reserve with explosive, self-destructive temper. The violence he’s known isn’t dodged, but it’s not fetishised either. The film has some of the quiet lightness of Bill Forsyth’s pictures, *Local Hero* (1983) most of all: there’s a similarly deep generosity towards nearly everyone. Probably Albert’s role in the gang best exemplifies the element of wish



It's a big cask: John Henshaw, Paul Brannigan

fulfilment: Gary Maitland plays him as the most haplessly helpless among them, culturally quarantined (he's never heard of Einstein, the Mona Lisa or even Edinburgh Castle) and seemingly clownishly dim – yet naturally witty too, and at moments the shrewdest. Ludicrous, yes, that he helps pull off a million-pound heist, except that such clowning often is a kind of camouflage, a self-protection only the very alert – or true friends – can see past.

Heist comedies are revenge fantasies, the dashing and the talented getting one over on the system. And in other hands, the moral could have been brainlessly Thatcherite: hone your meritocratic skills unaided, raise yourself towards your deserts, and all society benefits. Loach, looking affectionately askance

at the Morris model of radical social transformation out of artisanal excellence, believes true value to be fashioned from luck, sparky cheek, good (if clueless) companionship and the generosity grounding it all. Robbie would be nowhere if Harry, his community-payback boss, weren't observant, thoughtful and sympathetic. And *that's* where society benefits, of course, and the craft-maker uncovers joy. As a solution to the system's ills, to sink estates or gang violence or the poverty trap, discovering that you're a talented whisky-taster isn't remotely scaleable (or even very believable). But toss serendipity and kindness aside, and even fairytale doors begin to shut out all these lively minds and potential talents. **♦♦ Mark Sinker**

CREDITS

Producer
Rebecca O'Brien
Screenplay
Paul Lavery
Photography
Robbie Ryan
Editor
Jonathan Morris
Production Designer
Fergus Clegg
Music
George Fenton
Recordist
Ray Beckett
Costume Designer
Carole K Fraser

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Fleuve, Urania Pictures,
France 2 Cinéma,
Canal+, CinéCinéma,
Soficinéma, Le Pacte,
Cinéart, France
Télévisions, Canto Bros
Productions
Made through the
British Film Institute's
Film Fund
Executive Producers
Pascal Caucheteux
Vincent Maraval

CAST

Paul Brannigan
Robbie Emerson
John Henshaw
Harry
Gary Maitland
Albert
Jasmin Riggins
Mo
William Ruane
Rhino
Roger Allam
Thaddeus
Siobhan Reilly
Leonie
Charlie MacLean
Rory McAllister
Scott Dymond
Willy
Scott Kyle
Clancy

Neil Leiper
sniper
James Casey
Dougie

Dolby Digital
Colour by
DeLuxe
[1.85:1]

Distributor
E1 Films

Arirang

South Korea 2011

Director: Kim Ki-duk

Kim Ki-duk, even in the best of mental health, has always come across as a narcissist with an unwholesome interest in violence against women. In recent years no other director of his stature has gone from hero to zero in just a few years, an unedifying public process that started when he turned on his homeland audience in his native South Korea and then suffered some kind of nervous breakdown, we are told, after his lead actress in the 2008 film *Dream* nearly died in a scene which involved her character's suicide by hanging. The seemingly endless rehearsals of misogyny in films such as *Bad Guy* (2001) almost found a natural conclusion.

But whatever guilt Kim may have felt at that time seems to have mutated, in *Arirang*, into a seething resentment against his former assistant directors, whom he believes to have betrayed him. After filming an extensive video diary in which he is sometimes calm, sometimes drunk and emotional, he creates a fictional narrative sequence in which he jumps in a car and appears to go off, an artist vigilante, to shoot those who have proven the most treacherous. He saves one last bullet – a silvery drop of perfect self-pity – for himself.

As a document of a nervous breakdown it is a troubling one. Yet however mad Kim becomes he never forgets his craft – most of the shots and the editing are eerily beautiful. He films himself and then edits the footage so that in a later recording he is interviewing himself – at one point as a shadow. He shows himself as a man who has cut himself off from the world. He lives alone in a shack on a remote mountainside, and claims to have lived there for three years though we never see the summer months – all is snow and cold and winter. He builds his own espresso machine and handgun. There's quite a bit of cooking and food preparation. This is, curiously, a film about feasting. He seems to have a phone, perhaps the internet and certainly a large computer. But we never learn how he gets his food, who he interacts with, to what extent he is, for example, checking his emails. This not in any sense a realistic portrait of his life as a hermit.

The film is a loose companion piece to 2003's *Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter... and Summer*, and indeed Kim edits in sequences of himself acting in that film, dragging a stone anchor



Director's rut: Kim Ki-duk

through the snow as part of a Buddhist monk's quest for purity. But in this instance his philosophical utterances (eg "Life to me is sadism, self-torture and masochism") speak of disease rather than health. And the title of the film? That it's a Korean drinking song is pretty much all you need to know. **♦♦ Roger Clarke**

CREDITS

Producer
Kim Ki-duk
Written by
Kim Ki-duk
Cinematography
Kim Ki-duk
Editor
Kim Ki-duk
Sound
Kim Ki-duk

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Kim Ki-duk Film
Production
Film Extracts
*Spring, Summer,
Autumn, Winter... and
Summer* (2003)

WITH

Kim Ki-duk
Distributor
Terracotta Distribution
In Colour
[1.78:1]
Subtitles

SYNOPSIS Glasgow, the present. About to be a father, Robbie Emerson is sentenced to 300 hours' community service for assault. When his girlfriend Leonie goes into labour, her family beat Robbie up at the hospital. Harry from the community-service team sees this and takes Robbie to his flat. There Robbie learns that he's a dad, and Harry serves whisky. Leonie fears that Robbie will drag their son into his feud with Clancy. Harry takes the community-service group to a whisky distillery, where Robbie finds he has a nose for it. Clancy's gang chase and corner Robbie. Leonie's dad rescues him, offering him £5,000 to go to London without Leonie. Harry takes the group to a whisky-tasting event, where Robbie's palate wins the attention of whisky-buyer Thaddeus. At an upcoming auction, a cask of very rare whisky is expected to fetch a high price. The group hike to the auction, where Robbie siphons off four bottles from the cask before it sells for more than £1 million. Robbie offers a disappointed Thaddeus three of the four bottles, but two get broken. Robbie sells Thaddeus the third for £100,000. The last they give to Harry, dividing the money among the group. Robbie and Leonie and their son leave Glasgow. Robbie starts work at Thaddeus's friend's distillery.

SYNOPSIS South Korea, present day. In what begins as an extended video diary, South Korean filmmaker Kim Ki-duk appears to have taken bitter refuge from the world and is living in a shack on a mountainside. He is alone but for his ageing cat and a great deal of Soju. The film weaves in and out of an extended sequence in which the director becomes increasingly drunk and bemoans his lot. He seems to be haunted by an incident in his last feature film *Dream* in which an actress nearly died. Otherwise we see the director performing daily tasks, cooking, eating or, with a skilful turn of hand, making objects such as an espresso machine and finally a gun.

The film ends with Kim taking his homemade gun and driving into a town, where he appears to shoot people, presumably those who have most angered him. He saves one bullet for himself.

Avengers Assemble

USA 2012

Director: Joss Whedon

Certificate 12A 142m 37s

Avengers Assemble arrives with high expectations: not only as a supergroup sequel to four previous successful Marvel movies (two *Iron Man* films, *Captain America* and *Thor*), but also as the second-only film helmed by cult favourite Joss Whedon (creator of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) and by far his largest, most mainstream project. With his *Serenity* franchise cut short, and his Wonder Woman film falling by the wayside, Whedon – who turned to independent production and internet distribution for *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog* – appeared to be out of the Hollywood game.

His return is mirrored by the film's plot, in which the Hulk reluctantly (yet triumphantly) rejoins the fold, as the most volatile yet necessary of the band of discordant superheroes. Two previous *Hulk* outings (Ang Lee, 2003, and Louis Leterrier, 2008) failed to gel around the grumpy green giant, but here he's the film's heart. Whedon provides solid banter and convincing twists for Captain America, Iron Man, Thor, Black Widow, Hawkeye and S.H.I.E.L.D. director Nick Fury, as well as for villain Loki (all reprising established franchise roles), as they butt heads verbally and violently to requisite overpowering Skywalker sound and Alan Silvestri's bombastic score. But it's the characterisation and motion-capture animation of mild-mannered Dr Bruce Banner and his all-id 'other guy' that raises the film's game. Mark Ruffalo carries his history of dishevelled man-child roles, imbuing Banner with a melancholy edginess and the Hulk with witty intelligence.

At the end of the film, Fury announces that the indestructible Tesseract, a volatile extraterrestrial energy force, is in safe hands; early buzz online for *Avengers* suggests that the franchise is too, with the end credits cleverly presaging a sequel. Whedonesque complex characterisation and set-piece intelligence pervade: the climactic ultra-destruction of the third act is fluidly planned, avoids human casualties and salutes both humour and strategy, while each hero sports Jonathan Eusebio's inventive, individualised fight choreography, as characterful as their dialogue; Jeremy Renner's focused stillness as Hawkeye and Scarlett Johansson's offhand elegance as Black Widow are particularly striking. Character interaction, far from being filler between blockbuster acts of senseless violence, drives the plot, as the protagonists are manipulated by Fury as much as by Loki, the latter a tongue-trickster politician whose plans are both achieved and undone by his love of chaos. This chaos, arising from competing personalities (Tony Stark as the strutting ego, and Captain America the sanctimonious super-ego, to Hulk's



Hero factory: Jeremy Renner, Chris Evans, Scarlett Johansson

id), is what the Avengers, by becoming a team, work to overcome.

Like the Avengers as they subvert S.H.I.E.L.D.'s authority but still fulfil Fury's plan, the nature of the blockbuster limits how Whedonesque the film can be. Usually artful about subtext becoming text, Whedon has to overstate Loki's fascist self-staging in Stuttgart for the back row. Yet the film does, subtly, raise questions about the film factory (if not its consumers, as the Whedon-penned *Cabin in the Woods* does), just as the Avengers question S.H.I.E.L.D. At the outset, the Marvel and Paramount logos melt into the cloudy ultramarine of the Tesseract, a blue cube that could destroy the world, but also power it, suggesting an ambivalence towards the blockbuster form on Whedon's part.

As a studio machine, albeit with an old-fashioned commitment to character, it's flawless: satisfying fan expectations by soliciting their knowledge through commitment to the source texts and cascading references, and satisfying viewers not immersed in the Marvel world with clear characterisation, a strong story, eschewal of Michael Bay-style techno-fetishisation and mayhem, and wry humour about the nature of the enterprise. With its blink-and-miss hints at clean-energy politics and swipes at US foreign policy, *Avengers* is right-on enough to add fuel to conservative bonfires, already smouldering with 'race-lifting' claims about the casting of Samuel L. Jackson as Fury. Like its *Hulk*, *Avengers* smashes – and shows welcome smarts as it does.

◆◆ Sophie Mayer

CREDITS

Produced by
Kevin Feige
Screenplay
Joss Whedon
Story
Zak Penn
Joss Whedon
Based on the Marvel comics by Stan Lee, Jack Kirby
'Captain America' created by Joe Simon, Jack Kirby
Director of Photography
Seamus McGarvey
Editors
Jeffrey Ford
Lisa Lassek
Production Designer
James Chinlund
Music Composed and Conducted by
Alan Silvestri
Sound Designer
Christopher Boyes
Costume Designer
Alexandra Byrne
Visual Effects and Animation

Industrial Light & Magic
Weta Digital Ltd
Animation & Visual Effects
Digital Domain
Visual Effects
Hy"drau"lx
Cantina Creative
Luma Pictures
Fuel VFX
Evil Eye Pictures
Trixter
Additional:
Scanline VFX
Lola | VFX
Mudos FX
Whiskytree Inc
Perception
Supervising Stunt Co-ordinator
R.A. Rondell

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Production Companies
Marvel Studios presents in association with Paramount Pictures a Marvel Studios production
A Joss Whedon film
Executive Producers

Louis D'Esposito
Patricia Whitcher
Victoria Alonso
Jeremy Latcham
Alan Fine
Jon Favreau
Stan Lee

CAST

Robert Downey Jr
Tony Stark, 'Iron Man'
Chris Evans
Steve Rogers, 'Captain America'
Mark Ruffalo
Bruce Banner, 'Hulk'
Chris Hemsworth
Thor
Scarlett Johansson
Natasha Romanoff, 'Black Widow'
Jeremy Renner
Clint Barton, 'Hawkeye'
Tom Hiddleston
Loki
Clark Gregg
Agent Phil Coulson
Cobie Smulders
Agent Maria Hill
Jenny Agutter
World Security Council

member
Jerzy Skolimowski
Georgi Luchkov
Stellan Skarsgård
Erik Selvig
Samuel L. Jackson
Nick Fury
Gwyneth Paltrow
Pepper Potts

Dolby Surround 7.1
Datasat Digital Sound
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Some screenings presented in 3D

Distributor
Buena Vista International (UK)

12,835 ft +8 frames

Onscreen title
The Avengers
End credits title
Marvel's The Avengers

Battleship

USA 2012

Director: Peter Berg

Certificate 12A 131m 0s

No doubt there's an academic study already being written on the noisy output of the toy-and-game company turned corporate auteur Hasbro. It hasn't released a *Transformers* film this year, but its cultural dominance is running to schedule. *G.I. Joe: Retaliation* is out in August, and *Ouija* is planned for next year. In the meantime there's the blockbuster game adaptation *Battleship*, which is predictably loud, vulgar and ridiculous. However, if you can shake off the numbing audiovisual clamour, it's also rather funny and good-natured. Directed by Peter Berg (*The Kingdom*, *Hancock*), *Battleship* has no pretensions to being a good film; rather, it aims, and succeeds, at being a good bad film.

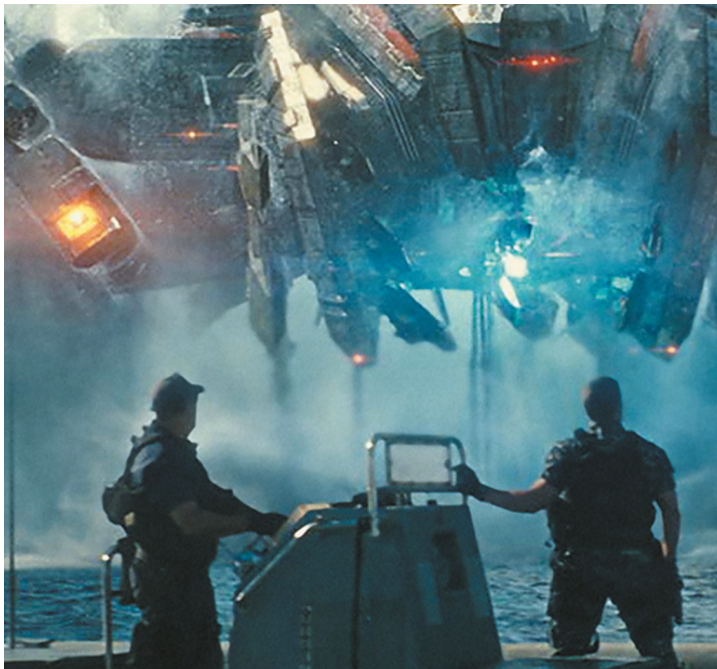
The film's ludicrous raison d'être is to adapt the venerable game 'Battleships' in the style of *Independence Day* (1996): the warships aren't pitted against each other, but rather against metallic alien dino-dragons that crash and leap through the waves. It's a theme-park conflict; the film opens just after the reissued *Titanic* (1997), from which *Battleship* borrows images with a smidgen of the terror and none of the tragedy.

And yet *Battleship* isn't vacuous. It begins at Pearl Harbor, and includes a contingent of Japanese sailors whom we expect to be squelched in the first act. Instead, their captain (Asano Tadanobu, from 2003's *Last Life in the Universe*) shares her lusty with lead Taylor Kitsch (John Carter) in the film's second half, as they race away from burning decks in buddy fashion. High-minded viewers may find nothing to praise in a violent fantasy that happens to pull an anti-racism card; and yet it is heartening, seeing the Pacific War replayed with the nations on the same side.

The aliens are simple game ciphers that don't make a lick of sense. They see the world in binary reds and greens, suggesting that their species was raised on videogames. Even their robot suits recall the game franchise Halo. But like the invisible aliens in the much panned *The Darkest Hour* (2011), there's something pleasingly old-school about them, as they go about clanking, stomping and swiping. Unfortunately, by the time they appear, we've been pounded so much by their fireworks that we don't appreciate their walk-on. Their gadgets are better: giant metal balls slicing through ships and undercutting motorways, buzzing with a genuine meanness.

While the middle of the storm is sometimes interminable (as in the *Transformers* films), the humour is actually funny. There's a disarmingly goofy comic opening, in which Kitsch's hero raids a food store to the strains of the *Pink Panther* theme in order to impress a girl. She's played by Brooklyn Decker, supplying the token love-interest; the singer Rihanna capably

SYNOPSIS Exiled from Asgard, Loki schemes to rule Earth. He captures the Tesseract, an extraterrestrial energy source being held by Nick Fury's secret US government agency S.H.I.E.L.D., and uses it to kidnap S.H.I.E.L.D.'s Agent Barton (codenamed Hawkeye for his marksman skills) and scientist Dr Erik Selvig. Fury revives an abandoned plan to form the Avengers, a team of superheroes: first Steve Rogers, WWII supersoldier Captain America, recently revived from a 60-year coma, then Dr Tony Stark, billionaire genius inventor of the Iron Man suit. Superspy Natasha Romanoff, known as Black Widow, programmed by the USSR but turned for S.H.I.E.L.D. by Hawkeye, secures Dr Bruce Banner, whose humanitarian work has suppressed his Hulk alter ego. After assembling on S.H.I.E.L.D.'s ship, the team apprehend Loki, and recapture him after Thor intervenes. Caged on the ship, Loki manipulates the team - which now includes Thor - into fractious infighting. Hawkeye leads a raid to free Loki, which leads to Hawkeye being freed from Loki's influence, the Hulk's emergence and a death, which Fury uses to bond the team. The Avengers (now including Hawkeye and Thor) head to Stark Tower, where Loki is launching the Tesseract's portal. His invasion force descends as the Hulk returns, and Captain America uses the latter to contain the former. S.H.I.E.L.D.'s overseers order a nuclear warhead to destroy Manhattan, although Black Widow and Selvig are closing the portal. Stark redirects the bomb, destroying Loki's army in the process. This victory, and Thor's rendition of Loki, secures the enmity of a greater force, and a premonition that the Avengers will reassemble.



Preys and warship: 'Battleship'

takes on a badass G.I. Jane part, as played in past films by Jenette Goldstein (*Aliens*) or Michelle Rodriguez (*Avatar*).

The instantly spoofable bad dialogue is balanced by good stereotype-busting jokes. There's a thread about Kitsch's lunkhead character misreading The Art of War, while hero amputee Gregory D. Gadson, balancing on two metal legs, is

mistaken for a cyborg. There's even a moment where the American protagonist charges his ship into a demented suicide attack while his Japanese opposite number looks on incredulous. And for viewers who last through the end credits, there's an amusing epilogue set in, of all places, Scotland. **♥♥ Andrew Osmond**

CREDITS

Producers

Brian Goldner
Scott Stuber
Peter Berg
Sarah Aubrey
Duncan Henderson
Bennett Schneir

Written by

Jon Hoerber
Erich Hoerber
Based on the Hasbro game 'Battleship'

Director of

Photography

Tobias Schliessler

Film Editors

Colby Parker Jr
Billy Rich
Paul Rubell

Production Designer

Neil Spisak

Music

Steve Jablonsky

Sound Mixers

John Reynolds
Doug Schulman

Costume Designers

Louise Mingerbach
Kim Tillman

Visual Effects & Animation

Industrial Light & Magic

Visual Effects

Prologue Films
Double Negative
Furious FX
Blur Studio
Level 256
Lolal/VFX
Additional:
Scanline VFX
The Embassy Visual Effects
Image Engine
Stunt Co-ordinator
Kevin Scott

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Production Companies

Universal Pictures
presents in association with Hasbro a Bluegrass Films/Film 44 production
A Peter Berg film
Executive Producers
Jonathan Mone
Braden Aftergood

CAST

Taylor Kitsch

Lieutenant Alex Hopper
Alexander Skarsgård
Commander Stone
Hopper

Rihanna

Petty Officer Cora

'Weeps' Raikes

Brooklyn Decker

Sam Shane

Asano Tadanobu

Captain Yugi Nagata

Hamish Linklater

Cal Zapata

Liam Neeson

Admiral Shane

Peter MacNicol

secretary of defence

John Tui

Chief Petty Officer

Walter 'The Beast' Lynch

Jesse Plemons

Boatswain Mate

Seaman Jimmy 'Ord' Ord

Gregory D. Gadson

Lieutenant Colonel Mick Canales

Jerry Ferrara

Sampson JOOD

Strodel

Adam Godley

Dr Nogrady

Dolby Digital/

Datasat/SDDS

Colour by

DeLuxe

[2.35:1]

Distributor

Universal Pictures

International UK & Eire

11,790 ft +0 frames

Beloved

France/United Kingdom/
Czech Republic 2011

Director: Christophe Honoré

Certificate 15 138m 34s

Beloved at first appears full of promise. The very chic cast includes Catherine Deneuve, Chiara Mastroianni, Ludivine Sagnier and Louis Garrel, with legendary Czech director Milos Forman thrown in. The romantic saga goes from Paris to Prague and back, to London and Montreal (via Reims) over four decades, from 1964 to 2007. A pair of red Roger Vivier high-heeled shoes plays an important part and, as in director Christophe Honoré's 2007 *Les Chansons d'amour*, there are songs. Despite this potential and a few good moments, the film disappoints.

Sagnier plays Madeleine, a passionate romantic who experiments with prostitution and then falls for good-looking Czech doctor Jaromil (played by Serbian actor Rasha Bukvic), follows him to Prague, has a daughter, Véra, with whom she comes back to Paris, tired of Jaromil's womanising. Decades later, she morphs into Catherine Deneuve, and Véra into Deneuve's real-life daughter Mastroianni. In many ways the casting is the most attractive aspect of the film and on two occasions *Beloved* exploits this feature cleverly. Towards the beginning, for instance, the two sets of mother and daughter 'meet' in Paris, overlapping on a bridge at night; there is something magical about the setting, the glittering lights across the river and the movements of the actresses. Then, right at the end, Deneuve/Madeleine revisits the Parisian building where she first slept with Jaromil (who has by now died), silently watched by Sagnier as her younger self.

In between, the meandering film (almost two and a half hours long) fails to create visual or aural excitement on a par with its ambition. Through the songs (as well as Deneuve's presence) the shadow of Jacques Demy is too obviously invoked, but without delivering any new pleasures:

this is a 'musical' with unmemorable songs and uneven singing (typically, the only singer, Michel Delpech, does not sing). The Prague sequences appear justified by co-production rather than the desire to use the city either visually (we hardly see anything) or historically (the 1968 'spring' is cursorily evoked). We are left with Honoré's cinephile gesture of casting Milos Forman to signify 'Czechness'.

Beloved's amorous discourse is not, in theory, without resonance. The film contrasts one love triangle from the past with another in the present, to the latter's detriment. Madeleine, Jaromil and Madeleine's husband François (Delpech) successfully, and humorously, negotiate their uneven circulation of desire (Madeleine loves Jaromil more than François, François loves only Madeleine, Jaromil loves Madeleine but is unfaithful...). In the 'freer' 1990s and 2000s Véra gets sex in toilets, and frustration. She is loved by Clément (Garrel) but only likes him as a friend; she loves Henderson (the excellent Paul Schneider) who, because he is gay, is fond of her but does not love her. Granted this generation lives under the shadow of terrorism and Aids – but to make Véra hopelessly pursue Henderson to the point of sleeping with him (and his partner) when he is HIV-positive, and then kill herself, all this on 9/11, both piles on melodramatic cliché and adds to the great gallery of masochistic women of French auteur film (perhaps also the only kind of cinema where a young woman would try prostitution 'for fun?').

Beloved could easily be accused of indulging the peculiar trend in contemporary French cinema that favours the sons and daughters of famous actors (here Deneuve *mere* and *filles* and Garrel, latest in the Garrel filmmaking dynasty). But if Garrel seems curiously absent, Mastroianni is as impressive as her rock-solid, celebrated mother. Pity they, like the wonderful Sagnier, don't have more fulfilling roles to play. Even for a film clearly dedicated to 'lightness', *Beloved* is too insubstantial.

♥♥ Ginette Vincendeau



Chansons d'amour: Milos Forman, Catherine Deneuve, Chiara Mastroianni

SYNOPSIS Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, the present. An international fleet sets out into the Pacific on naval exercises. The crews include Captain Stone Hopper and his brother Alex. The latter is about to be expelled from the US Navy for slovenly conduct.

Scientists have sent a communications beam into deep space, trying to contact an Earth-like planet. Five huge alien vessels follow the beam to Earth. One crashes in Hong Kong, causing devastation; the others splash down near the Hawaiian fleet. The invaders raise a force-field, cutting three ships off from the fleet. In the subsequent battle, two of the ships are destroyed and Stone is killed. As the senior surviving officer, Alex is forced to take command.

Alex works with a Japanese captain, Nagata, who finds a way to track the aliens as night falls. They destroy three vessels but their own ship is also destroyed. Surviving, Alex commandeers the venerable battleship the USS Missouri, crewed by war veterans. In a final battle, the humans stop the remaining alien vessel from sending a message to its world to invade Earth. Fighter planes seemingly wipe out the aliens, but a vessel fragment lands in Scotland...

CREDITS

Producer
Pascal Caucheteux
Written by
Christophe Honoré
with the complicity of
Adam Thirlwell
**Director of
Photography**
Rémy Chevrin
Editing
Chantal Hymans
Art Direction
Samuel Deshors
Songs by
Alex Beaupain
Sound
Guillaume Le Braz
Costumes
Pascaline Chavanne

©Why Not Productions,
France 2 Cinéma,
Sixteen Films, Negativ
**Production
Companies**
Why Not Productions
present a film by
Christophe Honoré
A Why Not Productions,
France 2 Cinéma,
Sixteen Films, Negativ
co-production
With the participation of
Canal+, France
Télévisions, Orange
Cinéma Séries
With the support of
Région Île-de-France,
Sofica Soficinéma 7,
State Fund for the
Support and
Development of Czech
Cinematography, Fonds
d'action SACEM
Developed with
Cinéma
With the support of
Région Île-de-France in
partnership with CNC
Executive Producer
Montreal Crew:
Suzanne Girard

CAST

Chiara Mastroianni
Véra
Catherine Deneuve
Madeleine (older)

Ludivine Sagnier
Madeleine (young)
Louis Garrel
Clément
Paul Schneider
Henderson
Milos Forman
Jaromil (older)
Rasha Bukvic
Jaromil (young)
Michel Delpech
François Gouniot (older)
Dustin Segura Suarez
Mathieu
Omar Ben Sellem
Omar

**Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles**

Distributor
New Wave Films

12,471 ft +0 frames

French theatrical title
Les Bien-aimés

Café de Flore

Canada/France 2011
Director: Jean-Marc Vallée
Certificate 15 120m 37s

Names can be misleading. *Café de Flore* may suggest romantic encounters and existential debate in the celebrated Parisian café, but what gives this film its title is a piece of electronic music by the British composer Matthew Herbert (aka Doctor Rockit), its Frenchness supplied by an accordion solo. Yet *Café de Flore* the film is not devoid of romanticism, nor for that matter of existential concerns.

Directed by French-Canadian filmmaker Jean-Marc Vallée, *Café de Flore* weaves together two stories set thousands of miles and four decades apart. In Paris in the 1960s, Jacqueline (Vanessa Paradis) gives birth to a son with Down's syndrome. Despite her husband leaving her in abject poverty, she is determined to give Laurent (Marin Gerrier), whom she loves passionately, as 'normal' an education as possible. Meanwhile in present-day Montreal we follow the love life and family troubles of well-to-do DJ Antoine (Kevin Parent), who has just left his wife Carole (Hélène Florent) and their two adolescent daughters to live with his younger lover Rose (Evelyne Brochu). For most of the film, the viewer is kept guessing as to what the connection between the two stories might be, despite a few clunky hints – such as Antoine walking, in slow motion, past a group of people with Down's syndrome in an airport, as well as the title piece of music. Put simply, the denouement involves mystic resonance and reincarnation (watch out for a tell-tale photograph right at the end of the credits). How viewers feel about this will determine whether they find the ending, and the film, profound or preposterous. This reviewer leans towards the latter, and yet has to admit that *Café de Flore* at times delivers some emotional punch from other more plausible parallels between the two strands.

As the stories unfold it becomes clear that maternal love and romantic love are equated, in their everyday pleasures (scenes of fun together) as well as in their trials and tribulations (jealousy, recriminations). Partly thanks to wonderful performances all round, there are convincing and emotionally potent moments, for instance between Jacqueline and Laurent, or between Antoine and Carole and their daughters. The film is at its best on this register of intimate realism. It is less good when grandstanding on cliché concepts such as the 'perfect soulmate', or the more excessive manifestations of love, maternal or romantic. Not coincidentally, excess is connected with the two mothers. Jacqueline is initially delighted when Laurent forms a bond with Véronique (Alice Dubois), a little girl who also has Down's syndrome, but when he begins to prefer Véronique's company to hers, the intensity of Jacqueline's love gives way to unforgiving possessiveness,



Mother care: Vanessa Paradis, Marin Gerrier

ultimately with dreadful consequences. Carole, meanwhile, is presented as the archetypal hysteric – sleepwalking, screaming, visiting a medium who validates the link between the two stories previously hinted at in Carole's nightmares. The ending asks us to believe that in giving Antoine's new relationship her blessing, Carole atones for Jacqueline refusing to let Laurent go – unless, as suggested by anachronisms such as Laurent playing a record of the 2000 'Café de Flore' in the 1960s sections, the Jacqueline-Laurent story is the product of Carole's imagination. Whatever. More egregious is the fact that, rather conveniently for Antoine, the ending amounts to Carole apologising for having reacted badly to him leaving her and their daughters for a younger woman.

Vallée claims music as an inspiration for his film, the two strands of the story fitting into one another "like an emotional score". Antoine's job is used to justify a composite – and at times very loud – soundtrack that includes, apart from the ubiquitous 'Café de Flore' number, songs by The Cure, Pink Floyd and Sigur Rós among others. This focus on music, together with the mystic element and the mother-and-son bond, links *Café de Flore* to Vallée's 2005 indie success *C.R.A.Z.Y.* (following a surprising detour into heritage cinema with *The Young Victoria* in 2009). Here, however, the convoluted leaps in time and space often make the film difficult to follow, and in danger of appearing pretentious rather than sophisticated.

◆◆ **Ginette Vincendeau**

CREDITS

Produced by
Pierre Even
Marie-Claude Poulin
Written by
Jean-Marc Vallée
**Director of
Photography**
Pierre Cottureau
Editor
Jean-Marc Vallée
Art Directors
Canadian Unit:
Florence Babin-
Beaudry French Unit:
Emmanuelle Pucci
Sound Engineer
Jean Minondo
Costume Designers
Ginette Magny
Emmanuelle
Youchnovski

©Productions Café de
Flore inc./Monkey Pack
Films
**Production
Companies**

Alliance Vivafilm
presents an Item 7,
Monkey Pack Films,
Crazy Films co-
production
With the financial
participation of Téléfilm
Canada, SODEC
Société de
développement des
entreprises culturelles -
Québec, Crédit d'impôt
cinéma et télévision -
gestion Sodec, Canal+
and Ciné+, La Banque
postale image 4, Société
Radio-Canada
Téléfilm Canada as part
of a Canada/France co-
production
In association with
Sofica Coficup/Backup
Films, Crédit d'impôt
pour la production
cinématographique
canadienne - Canada,
Super Écran, Astral Télé
Réseaux, Ministère de la
culture et de la

communication (Centre
national du cinéma et de
l'image animée) - CNC,
Fonds Québecor,
Soficinéma 7
Executive Producer
France:
Marc Stanimirovic

CAST

Vanessa Paradis
Jacqueline
Kevin Parent
Antoine Godin
Hélène Florent
Carole
Evelyne Brochu
Rose
Marin Gerrier
Laurent
Alice Dubois
Véronique
**Everynne de la
Chenelière**
Amélie
Michel Dumont
Julien Godin

Michel Laperrière
psychologist
Linda Smith
Louise Godin
Joanny Corbeil-Picher
Juliette
Rosalie Fortier
Angéline

**Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles**

Distributor
Momentum Pictures

10,855ft +8 frames

SYNOPSIS Paris, the late 1960s. Jacqueline gives birth to a son Laurent, who has Down's syndrome. Her husband leaves her, but despite her poverty, she vows to give the boy a normal education. At school, Laurent meets Véronique, another Down's syndrome child. When he becomes passionately fond of Véronique, Jacqueline tries to separate them. Montreal, the present. Successful DJ Antoine leaves his wife Carole and two teenage daughters to live with his younger lover Rose. Carole reacts badly and has violent nightmares in which she is in a car in Paris. She visits a medium. Unable to keep Laurent and Véronique apart, Jacqueline picks up the girl in her car and deliberately crashes into a lorry, killing all three. Carole gives Antoine and Rose her blessing. A photograph of young Antoine and Carole in Paris shows Jacqueline and Laurent in the background.

Artificial Eye

New Titles on DVD and Blu-ray



Pawel Pawlikowski **The Woman in the Fifth**

Based on the best-selling novel by Douglas Kennedy, features the passionate and tormented love story between Tom (Ethan Hawke) and Margit (Kristen Scott Thomas).

● Released on DVD and Blu-ray 11 June



Michael Winterbottom **Trishna**

Based on Thomas Hardy's classic novel Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Trishna is a beautifully shot, classic tale of love and tragedy starring Freida Pinto and Riz Ahmed.

● Released on DVD and Blu-ray 9 July



Jean-Pierre & Luc Dardenne **The Kid with a Bike**

Winner of the Grand Prix at Cannes, it tells the story of Cyril, an 11-year-old boy in search of his father (Jeremie Renier). This affecting and gripping drama is one of the finest films from the directors of 'The Child' and 'Rosetta'.

● Released on DVD and Blu-ray 23 July

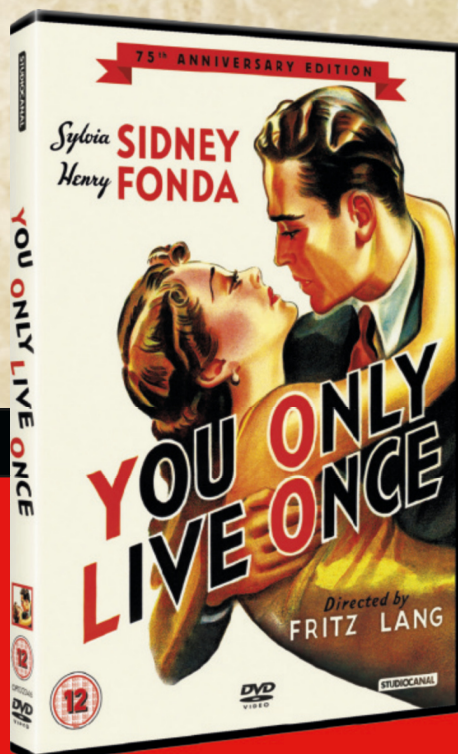
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Variety



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Casa de mi padre

USA/Mexico 2011
 Director: Matt Piedmont
 Certificate 15 84m 38s

In the first scene of this burrito belch of a film, someone makes an unfunny joke and his buddies laugh for far longer than appropriate, a little like in *Austin Powers* (1997). That's pretty much the film in a nutshell, except without the laughter. The joke is that Will Ferrell, a white American (one of whose first feature roles was in *Austin Powers*), is playing a Mexican rancher in what looks like and effectively is a bad Mexican movie or telenovela. Since bad Mexican movies and telenovelas are, at least from a British perspective, somewhat arcane targets for parody, *Casa de Mi Padre's* accuracy and fairness have to be taken on trust, but essentially we are to believe that Mexican films and television shows are cheaply made and irredeemably formulaic, and that replicating these things for an international audience is inherently hilarious.

Armando (Ferrell) has to go mano a mano with his brother Raul (Diego Luna) when he discovers that the latter's plan to rescue their father's ranch from bankruptcy involves taking customers from local drug lord La Onza (Gael García Bernal), who is also the uncle of Raul's fiancée Sonia (Genesis Rodriguez), to whom Armando has taken a shine. The DEA encourages the gangs to destroy each other, while the Mexican police take backhanders. The film's one funny scene involves Raul trying to justify his business to Armando on the grounds that it's not his problem if Americans want to be "shit-eating crazy monster babies" and use drugs, but much of the purported comedy, like the machine-gun massacre at Raul and Sonia's wedding, is badly misjudged, and the occasional knock-and-run references to Mexico's real sorrows only aggravate the problem.

There aren't, strictly speaking, that many gags, but most of them involve things like bad rear projection, faulty continuity and poor effects work. Ferrell has done a large number of cameo roles and internet shorts, particularly on *Funny or Die*, the website he helped to found, so it's difficult to speak of his 'worst film', but suffice to say that *Casa de Mi Padre* is less entertaining than the little-liked, little-seen *Land of the Lost* (2009). A minor irony is that Ferrell's best films, *Anchorman* (2004) above all,



Genesis Rodriguez, Will Ferrell

are not really any better made than the films *Casa de Mi Padre* spoofs, being apparently thrown together from the best improvisations without much regard for structure. That he is playing against his strengths, which are mostly verbal, by performing in a language in which he isn't fluent, is of course a *very* clever joke, but doesn't merit a feature.

◆ Henry K. Miller

CREDITS

Produced by
 Will Ferrell
 Adam McKay
 Emilio Diez Barroso
 Darlene Caamaño
 Loquet
Written by
 Andrew Steele
Director of Photography
 Ramsey Nickell
Edited by
 David Trachtenberg
Production Designer
 Kevin Kavanaugh
Music
 Andrew Feltenstein
 John Nau
Sound Mixer
 Michael Koff
Costume Designers
 Tracey Gigi Field
 Marylou Lim

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Production Companies
 NALA, Pantelion Films, Televisa Films and Lionsgate present a Gary Sanchez production
 A NALA Films production
Executive Produced by
 Kevin Messick
 Scott Lumpkin

Jessica Elbaum
 Billy Rozzar
 Fernando Rovzar
 Alex Garcia

CAST

Will Ferrell
 Armando Alvarez
Gael García Bernal
 La Onza
Diego Luna
 Raul Alvarez
Genesis Rodriguez
 Sonia
Pedro Armendáriz Jr
 Miguel Ernesto Alvarez
Nick Offerman
 DEA Agent Parker
Efren Ramirez
 Esteban
Adrian Martinez
 Manuel
Manuel Urrego
 Officer Blancarto

Dolby Digital
In Colour
 [2.35:1]
 Subtitles

Distributor
 StudioCanal Limited

7617 ft +0 frames

The Cold Light of Day

Spain/USA 2012
 Director: Mabrouk El Mechri
 Certificate 12A 93m 5s

The film's anodyne title gives little away, but as soon as square-jawed Henry Cavill pitches up in sunny Spain to be greeted by his way-too-uptight dad Bruce Willis we know it won't be too long before all hell breaks loose. Our suspicions are swiftly proved correct after the rest of the family are kidnapped, Willis (to his son's surprise, not ours) turns out to have been a CIA agent all along, and the leading man then finds himself in inhospitable foreign territory, dodging bullets, trusting no one, battling to free his mother and younger brother from mysterious captors. And so on. It's a not-unfamiliar scenario, with its roots in Hitchcock and more recent incarnations including Roman Polanski's *Frantic* (1988) and Jaume Collet-Serra's *Unknown* (2011) – all conceived to put an ordinary hero in an extraordinary situation, encouraging audience empathy intensified by serial jeopardy. Scott Wiper and John Petro's efficient but hardly groundbreaking screenplay puts all the pieces where you would expect them, stringing along car chases, gunfights and some hairy-looking rooftop-dangling at regular intervals. They are, however, exactly the pieces you'd expect, placed exactly where you'd expect them, with the result that the film's proficiency becomes merely predictable, the life-and-death issues at stake for the hard-pressed hero thus losing impact since they're so obviously devolved from a ready-made set of generic ingredients.

If anything, the film shows how tricky it is to judge the line between tradition and innovation when assembling a film that has no aspirations beyond being a solid genre entry. The makers here have a handle on the formula all right, but lack the confidence or inventiveness to bring anything new to the party, unless there are still viewers surprised by the relatively early demise of one of the top-billed performers, or who haven't worked out that Sigourney Weaver smiling in a trouser suit is a clear sign of malign intentions. To be

fair, the film does well enough to sketch in a troubled father-son relationship before the gunfire starts up, though leading man Cavill subsequently brings little in the way of personality to his admittedly standard-issue role, even if he's convincing enough in terms of the story's physical demands. Elsewhere, director Mabrouk El Mechri and his cameraman Remi Adefarasin make the most of the Spanish locations, from the sun-splashed white of coastal communities to the labyrinthine side streets and open public squares and boulevards that make Madrid an effective setting for this kind of material.

Overall, though, little of note to report in a film that somehow omits the old visual chestnut of the fruit-cart rammed by a speeding vehicle, but otherwise delivers a high count of thriller clichés.

◆ Trevor Johnston

CREDITS

Produced by
 Trevor Macy
 Marc D. Evans
Written by
 Scott Wiper
 John Petro
Director of Photography
 Remi Adefarasin
Editor
 Valerio Bonelli
Production Designer
 Benjamin Fernández
Music
 Lucas Vidal
Sound Mixer
 Antonio Block
Costume Designer
 Sabine Daigeler

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Production Companies
 Summit Entertainment and Intrepid Pictures present in association with Galavis Films an Intrepid Pictures and Film Rites production
Executive Producers
 Steven Zaillian
 Scott Wiper
 Kevin Mann
 Matthew Perniciaro
 Jesús Martínez Asencio

CAST

Henry Cavill
 Will Shaw
Sigourney Weaver
 Jean Carrack
Bruce Willis
 Martin Shaw
Verónica Echegui
 Lucia
Roschdy Zern
 Zahir

Joseph Mawle
 Gorman
Oscar Jaenada
 Máximo
Caroline Goodall
 Laurie
Rafi Gavron
 Josh
Emma Hamilton
 Dara
Jim Piddock
 Meckler
Fermi Reixach
 Carlos

Dolby Digital
In Colour
 [2.35:1]
 Part-subtitled

Distributor
 EI Films

8,377 ft +8 frames

Spanish theatrical title
 La fría luz del día

SYNOPSIS Spain, present day. American businessman Will Shaw joins his father Martin, mother Laurie and brother Josh on holiday, but an argument on their yacht causes Will to swim ashore. He returns later to find that the family have been kidnapped. The Spanish police are in cahoots with the villains as a confused Will goes on the run. Martin reappears and reveals that he lied about his posting as a government employee; he is in fact a CIA agent, and the kidnappers are looking for a briefcase he took during one of his operations. Father and son drive to Madrid, where Martin's CIA boss Jean Carrack says she no longer has the briefcase. Martin is shot dead by a mystery sniper, and Will flees with his father's gun. The US embassy delivers Will to Carrack, whom he instantly mistrusts. Escaping again, he discovers that Carrack has killed his father's lawyer friend Diego. Will is thrown together with Lucia, Diego's niece – who realises that she is also Will's half-sister. A rendezvous reveals that the kidnappers are Mossad agents seeking the return of stolen state secrets which Carrack is about to sell to the highest bidder. Israeli commander Zahir forces Will to act as a lure for Carrack, and after a gunfight and car chase through central Madrid he shoots Carrack as she is about to kill Will. Zahir gets the briefcase, and Laurie and Josh are released.

Elfie Hopkins

United Kingdom 2011

Director: Ryan Andrews

Certificate 15 88m 55s

"I gave you your biggest case – you're nothing without me. I made you!" Near the end of *Elfie Hopkins*, Gammon family patriarch Charlie (Rupert Evans) shouts these words at the film's eponymous heroine (Jaime Winstone). The line is both posturing cliché and non sequitur, implying that Charlie is somehow the Moriarty to Elfie's Holmes, or the Joker to her Batman, when in fact he is nothing of the sort – and Elfie, self-appointed amateur sleuth in a sleepy village that doesn't need one, is hardly the world's greatest detective either, inspired more by marijuana and guilt over her mother's death than by any actual crimes. When the exotic Gammon family move in next door, Elfie soon starts investigating them – but although, even before you can say *Rear Window* (or *Fright Night* or *The 'Burbs* or *Disturbia*), her vague and entirely capricious suspicions begin to look well founded, they are nonetheless rooted less in genuine skills of detection than in misdirected teen insolence, unbelievable leaps of intuition and the blindest of coincidences.

Desultoriness reigns in Ryan Andrews's debut feature, lost somewhere between the hallucinatory haze of Elfie's altered perceptions and the shortcomings of the screenplay (co-written with Riyad Barmania, who also collaborated on Andrews's 2011 short *Little Munchkin*). *Elfie Hopkins* plays pass-the-parcel with genre, never settling on a coherent tone and utterly gutting its chances of keeping the viewer engaged. As a comedy, it leaves broad, cartoonish characters (such as Butcher Bryn, played by Winstone's father Ray) in desperate need of punchlines. As a drama, it limns a traumatic backstory for Elfie that goes nowhere – and it fails to draw complexity, sympathy or even interest from its protagonist's many flaws. As a satire, it vividly stages the exploitation of 'dead-end' rural communities by urban yuppies wanting a taste of the countryside, but doesn't bite deep enough to leave much of an impression. As a horror, it delivers grotesquerie and gore, but never actually frightens. And

as a detective thriller, it reveals the Gammons' culpability too early to generate tension, and presents a process of discovery too arbitrary to be satisfying, as its hard-toking heroine sleeps through stakeouts, misses vital clues and generally breaks all the conventions of the gumshoe movie without once lighting upon a better alternative. By the time Elfie has suited up to confront her opponents in full action-girl mode, narrative integrity has long since been abandoned for meandering pastiche. Nothing here can be taken seriously, and yet none of it is funny either.

➡ Anton Bitel

CREDITS

Produced by
Michael Wiggs
Jonathan Sothcott
Written by
Riyad Barmania
Ryan Andrews
Director of Photography
Tobia Sempì
Editor
Peter Hollywood
Production Designer
Tim Dickel
Original Score Written and Produced by
Jordan Andrews
Location Sound Mixer
Mario Mooney
Costume Designer
Sian Jenkins
Fight Co-ordinator
Kevin McCurdy

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Production Companies
Kaleidoscope Film
Distribution presents a Black & Blue/Size 9 production
In association with The Fyzz Facility, Tweed Films and The Mews.
Des Lyons and Flexibon Films
Executive Producers
Ray Winstone
Billy Murray
Spencer Pollard
Simon Phillips
Wayne Marc Godfrey
Robert Jones
Gareth Mullaney
Ciaran Mullaney

CAST

Jaime Winstone
Elfie Hopkins
Aneurin Barnard
Dylan Parker
Rupert Evans
Charlie Gammon

Kate Magowan
Isabelle Gammon
Kimberley Nixon
Pippa
Gwyneth Keyworth
Ruby Gammon
Will Payne
Elliot Gammon
Amanda Drew
Susannah Hopkins
Julian Lewis Jones
Harry Hopkins
Claire Cage
Lottie Jenkins
Richard Harrington
Timothy Jenkins
Sule Rimi
Constable Kelly
Alastair Cumming
Mr Parker
Steven Mackintosh
Michael
Ray Winstone
Butcher Bryn

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Kaleidoscope Film
Distribution

7993 ft +8 frames
(after cuts of 6 seconds)



Carry on Columbus: Gael García Bernal, Juan Carlos Aduviri

Even the Rain

Spain/Mexico/France 2010

Director: Icíar Bollaín

It's perhaps not surprising that the actress Icíar Bollaín, who wrote a book about Ken Loach after filming *Land and Freedom* with him in the mid-1990s, has in her own work as a director pursued a social-realist approach that owes much to his methods. Extensive research, shooting on location as opposed to in studios, everyday locations, careful work with performers (sometimes non-professionals) and a willingness to engage with thorny social issues – immigration in *Flowers from Another World* (1999), domestic abuse in *Take My Eyes* (2003), the personal malaise that comes from unemployment in *Mataharis* (2007) – are all characteristics of her directorial features to date.

With *Even the Rain*, Bollaín (collaborating for the first time with screenwriter husband Paul Laverty) returns to the post-colonial tropes of *Flowers from Another World*. This time, however, the story takes place not in Spain but in Bolivia: a film crew, under the lean leadership of bullish Spanish producer Costa (Luis Tosar), prepares to

work with hip Mexican director Sebastián (Gael García Bernal) on a revisionist historical epic examining the mechanisms through which colonial power was consolidated by Christopher Columbus during his time as governor in the Caribbean in the late 1400s. Bollaín crafts a brave feature that isn't afraid to interrogate the politics of transnational filmmaking, with the ostensibly progressive Sebastián discarding his liberal credentials as the shoot runs into difficulties when the locals rise up in protest at the proposed privatisation of their water supply. *Even the Rain* follows Carlos Saura's maligned *El Dorado* (1988) in re-examining Spain's problematic imperial past – but whereas Saura opted for a big-budget historical costume epic, Bollaín frames her story within a meta-narrative that effectively dissects the vocabularies of the period drama.

As the hardosed producer whose tough-guy facade melts when faced with the need to 'rescue' an injured child caught up in the crossfire, Tosar struggles against this weak narrative mechanism that ultimately presents Costa's emotional journey in oversimplistic terms. García Bernal's smooth-talking filmmaker Sebastián, meanwhile, is a tamer and less nuanced role. It is Karra Elejalde who really

SYNOPSIS Cochabamba, Bolivia, 2000. Director Sebastián and his producer Costa are searching for extras for a film about Christopher Columbus. Their film will show Columbus's rapacious greed for gold and also his abusive treatment of the native population, which pits him against Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas.

At an open casting for extras, Sebastián and Costa encounter the combative Daniel, whom Sebastián wants to cast as indigenous Taíno leader Hatuey. Costa reluctantly agrees. Daniel soon becomes involved with the local populace, who are battling the proposed privatisation of their water supply. When Daniel is arrested because of his involvement in the protests, Costa has to bribe the authorities to release him, and as the conflict intensifies he is obliged to move the project out of Cochabamba.

As they are leaving, Daniel's wife Teresa approaches Costa to request his assistance in finding their young daughter Belén, who has been hurt in the rioting. Costa finds the badly injured girl and takes her to hospital. When he meets with Daniel again, Costa is able to provide proof that his political activism has reaped results – the multinational is pulling out of Bolivia. The men embrace as Costa leaves to try to complete the film with Sebastián.

SYNOPSIS Thorntree Valley, England, the present. Self-appointed village sleuth Elfie Hopkins and her geeky best friend Dylan Parker decide to investigate their new neighbours – Charlie and Isabelle Gammon and teenaged twins Elliot and Ruby – after their suspicions are raised by Charlie's large collection of professional knives (left with local butcher Bryn to sharpen) and some strange nocturnal goings-on. As the Jenkins family leave on a bespoke package holiday designed for them by the Gammons, Dylan's research reveals a trail of missing persons left in the Gammons' wake. Elfie and Dylan chance upon the bloody scene of the Jenkinses' deaths, but flee as the twins approach. Returning with Elfie's stepmother Susannah, they find that the Gammons have already summoned Constable Kelly, who has arrested Michael, a local man known for his grudge against Timothy Jenkins. Elfie's allegations about the Gammons are ridiculed.

Elfie deduces that the Gammons are a family of cannibals, but no one believes her except lovesick Dylan, who sneaks into the Gammons' garage and discovers body parts. Ruby captures Dylan but, confused by her feelings towards him, spares him. Charlie stabs Dylan's father in front of Elfie, and the Gammons murder Elfie's father and Susannah. Now armed, Elfie shoots Elliot and bludgeons Isabelle to death. Dylan cuts Ruby's throat as she is about to smother Elfie. Charlie is poised to kill Elfie when Bryn shoots him in the back. Dylan leaves for university.

← impresses as the volatile actor Antón –cast in the role of Columbus—who is at least aware of his own selfishness and drunkenly articulates the base financial imperatives that govern the cast and crew's association with the project. The film company coming in to exploit the local population—the shoot is taking place in Bolivia because of the lower production costs involved—is shown to be not that different from the greedy multinationals trying to control the populace's basic resources. The film is set against the Cochabamba Water Wars that took place in 1999-2000, and its strengths lie in finding parallels between the different layers of exploitation that govern neoliberal commerce—a reception hosted by a politician sees Sebastián uncomfortably forced to justify paying the locals the same exploitative wages that he denounces to the Bolivian dignitaries. Indeed, Bollaín never misses an opportunity to show how the rich natural resources of the Americas have been harnessed for the commercial gain of a few.

Bollaín's film may lack narrative sophistication but its muscular performances and angry political edge ultimately offer a formula for an emotionally charged social cinema unafraid to wear its crusading credentials on its sleeve.

♦♦ Maria Delgado

CREDITS

Produced by
Juan Gordon
Written by
Paul Laverly
Director of Photography
Alex Catalán
Editor
Angel Hernández Zoido
Art Director
Juan Pedro de Gaspar
Original Music
Alberto Iglesias
Sound
Emilio Cortés
Pelayo Gutiérrez
Nacho Royo-Villanova
Costume Designer
Sonia Grande

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Alebrje Cine y Video/
Mandarin Cinema
Production Companies
A Morena Films
production in
co-production with
Mandarin Cinema,
Alebrje Cine y Video,
Vaca Films, También la
lluvia, AIE
With the participation of
TVE, Canal+ España,
AXN, Canal+
With the collaboration of
Gobierno de España -
Ministerio de Cultura,
Eurimages, Xunta de
Galicia - Consellería de
Cultura e Turismo, Haut
et Court, Natixis
Cofeciné, ICO - Instituto
de Crédito Oficial
Executive Producers
Pilar Benito

CAST

Luis Tosar
Costa
Gael García Bernal
Sebastián
Juan Carlos Aduviri
Daniel, 'Hatuey'

Karra Elejalde
Antón, 'Columbus'
Raúl Arévalo
Juan, 'Montesinos'
Carlos Santos
Alberto, 'Los Casos'
Cassandra
Cianguerotti
María
Milena Soliz
Belén, 'Panuca'
Leónidas Chiri
Teresa

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Dogwoof

Spanish/Mexican
theatrical title
También la Lluvia

Faust

Russia 2011

Director: Alexander Sokurov

Certificate 15 139m 30s

Faust is our Film of the Month and is reviewed on page 52.

CREDITS

Producer
Andrey Sigle
Screenplay
Alexander Sokurov
Marina Koreneva
Book by Yuri Arabov
Freely adapted from
Johann Wolfgang von
Goethe
Director of Photography
Bruno Delbonnel
Editor
Jörg Hauschild
Art Director
Elena Zhukova
Music
Andrey Sigle
Sound
Makar Akhpashev
Costume Designer
Lidia Krukova

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Medienförderung, St.
Petersburg,
Filmförderung, Russia
Production Companies
Proline-Film, St.
Petersburg
With the support of
Stiftung für Film- und
Medienförderung, St.
Petersburg,
Filmförderung, Russia

present a film by
Alexander Sokurov

CAST

Johannes Zeiler
Faust
Anton Adasinskiy
moneylender, Mauricius
Muller
Isolda Dychauk
Margarete
Georg Friedrich
Wagner
Hanna Schygulla
moneylender's wife
Antje Lewald
Margarete's mother,
Gretchen
Florian Brückner
Valentin
Maxim Mehmet
Valentin's friend,
Altmayer
Sigurdur Skulason
Faust's father

Dolby
In Colour
[1.37:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Artificial Eye Film
Company

12,555 ft +0 frames

SYNOPSIS 18th-century Germany. Questing scientist Heinrich Faust, a religious sceptic frustrated by the limits of his knowledge and beset by chronic poverty, asks his father for money. But the father, a doctor, is too busy with his poor patients to help, so Faust turns instead to the moneylender Muller, who refuses to pawn a ring set with a philosopher's stone. Muller later visits Faust and his servant Wagner, ostensibly to return the ring, but in fact to distract Faust from his studies by escorting him to various public spaces in the town: a church, a bath-house and a tavern. In the latter, Muller gets a crowd of raucous students drunk and goads Faust into stabbing the student Valentin in a brawl. At Valentin's funeral, Faust is attracted to the dead man's sister Margarete and determines to "save" her. Faust contrives to meet Margarete in church, but the student Altmayer tells her that Faust killed Valentin. Faust asks the devilish Muller to arrange for him to have one night with Margarete, and signs a contract in blood. After a night of passion, Faust awakes as if from a dream and is commandeered by a soldier who escorts him into the countryside on horseback. By a waterfall, Faust encounters dead colleagues—including Valentin, who thanks him for his death. Demanding more than the eternal solitude allowed in his contract, Faust turns on Muller and buries him under rocks. A heavenly voice asks Faust where he is going, and he replies, "Further and further."

Free Men

France 2011

Director: Ismaël Ferroukhi

Certificate 12A 99m 0s

"Freely inspired by actual events," as its opening title announces, *Free Men* intermingles fact and fiction to tell the story of a Paris mosque that supplied North African Jews with forged Muslim identification, even as the Gestapo bore down on the place of worship.

Free Men reimagines history through the eyes of Algerian immigrant Younes (Tahar Rahim), who at the beginning of the film is making a living through a black-market trade in cigarettes and stockings. After being hauled in by the Vichy police for his illicit activities, Younes buys back his freedom by agreeing to spy on the local mosque and its resident rector, Si Kaddour Ben Ghabrit (Michel Lonsdale, in a neat reversal of his role as a French monk in 2010's *Of Gods and Men*). It isn't long before he finds his allegiances shifting under the influence of velvet-voiced singer Salim (Mahmoud Shalaby) and Leila, a beautiful Resistance fighter (an underused Lubna Azabal, last seen in *Incendies*).

At first glance, *Free Men's* exposé of yet another little-known aspect of the Occupation might seem hopelessly familiar. The subject-matter and loosely generic format—blending thriller with *film noir*—call to mind Rachid Bouchareb's *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Outside the Law* (2010), as well as such Resistance classics as Jean-Pierre Melville's *Army of Shadows* (1969). Yet *Free Men* fails to match the tension of these antecedents, confining the action to one brief car chase/shootout.

Nonetheless, director Ismaël Ferroukhi has some subtle twists up his sleeve, albeit ones that temper rather than heighten the film's emotional pull; not least of these is the central place of music. While we follow the action almost exclusively from Younes's point of view, the character

himself is largely silent (Rahim, costume notwithstanding, seems to have strutted into 1940s Paris straight off the set of *A Prophet*, bringing to Younes the same combination of taciturn charisma and bewildered vulnerability that bore up Jacques Audiard's 2009 prison drama). Time and again Younes meets the questions put to him with no more than a searching gaze. By contrast, the strains of strings, woodwind and drums seem to capture a powerful universal sentiment that exists beyond words.

The film's standout sequence sees Younes listening to Salim's band for the first time and transforming from motionless outsider to a bobbing, swaying participant in a communal movement. If it's impossible to say at this point what Younes might be thinking, it's worth noting that the instrument Salim is playing is the same *darbuka* that Younes traded for a packet of cigarettes in the film's opening sequence: the move from object of commerce to symbol of comradeship is suggestive of an ideological shift.

Finishing on a solemn note of irresolution (which foreshadows, perhaps, the future fate of Younes and his fellow Algerians), *Free Men* fails then as a genre piece. But it succeeds as something more contemplative, raising questions about the relationship between race, nation, creed, religion and even sexuality without ever sliding into didacticism. It's a thoughtful and thought-provoking piece of filmmaking, which repays repeat viewing.

♦♦ Catherine Wheatley

CREDITS

Produced by
Fabienne Vonier
Screenplay
Ismaël Ferroukhi
Alain-Michel Blanc
Director of Photography
Jérôme Alméras
Editor
Annette Dutertre
Art Director
Thierry François
Original Music
Armand Amar
Sound

Jean-Paul Mugel
Séverin Favriau
Stéphane Thiébaud
Costume Designer
Virginie Montel

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Productions, France 3
Cinéma, Solaire
Productions, V.M.P.
Production Companies
Pyramide Productions
present
In co-production with
France 3 Cinéma,



Something Vichy going on: Tahar Rahim

Solaire Productions,
V.M.P.
With the participation of
Canal+, France
Télévisions,
Cinéma,
TV5Monde, Centre
national du cinéma et de
l'image animée and the
support of Fonds
Images de la diversité,
Région Île-de-France,
Programme Media de
l'Union Européenne
In association with
Manon, Sofica Coficup -
Backup Films
Executive Producer
Stéphane Parthenay

Christopher Buchholz
Major von Ratibor
Farid Larbi
Ali
Stéphane Rideau
Francis
Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Artificial Eye Film
Company

8,910 ft +0 frames

French theatrical title
Les Hommes libres

CAST

Tahar Rahim
Younes
Michael Lonsdale
Si Kaddour Ben Ghabrit
Mahmoud Shalaby
Salim
Lubna Azabal
Leila

SYNOPSIS Paris, 1942. Black-marketeer Younes is one of many North African workers who have come to the city looking for work. When the police uncover Younes's illegal stash of goods while searching for his cousin Ali, a union agitator and Resistance leader, the police chief cuts him a deal, trading Younes's freedom for his agreement to spy on the activities of a local mosque suspected of supplying fraudulent Muslim identification to Jews.

At the mosque, Younes is drawn to Salim, a charismatic singer. When he realises that his new friend is Jewish, he confesses his mission to resident rector Si Kaddour Ben Ghabrit, who reveals that Ali is hiding in the mosque. After Younes's role as a spy is terminated, he renounces his black-market activities and joins the Resistance. When Salim's fake papers are disputed by police, Ali and Younes save him by carving a fake headstone for his father, thus 'proving' his Muslim origins. However, they are unable to prevent the arrest and subsequent execution of mosque worker Leila – who is revealed to be a leading Algerian communist.

After fellow freedom fighter Francis is injured in a raid, Ali, Younes and two others rescue him from hospital, where Younes realises that racketeer Omar is a police informant. A shootout with the police ensues, and only Francis and Younes survive. Furious, Ben Ghabrit announces that the refugees will have to be evacuated from the mosque; as Gestapo troops raid the building, Younes and the others narrowly evade capture. While the majority depart by boat for Algeria, Younes opts to remain in Paris and continue the fight, beginning by assassinating Omar.

In August 1944 Younes is reunited with Ben Ghabrit and Salim. He reflects on the words of Algerian nationalist Messali Hadj, who argued that by fighting alongside the French during the war North Africans would earn the same rights on Victory Day.

The Gospel of Us The Passion of Port Talbot

United Kingdom 2012

Director: Dave McKean

Certificate 12A 119m 48s

The Gospel of Us is the film version of the three-day theatrical event staged by Michael Sheen with National Theatre Wales and writer Owen Sheers in locations around Port Talbot during Easter 2011. A contemporary reworking of the Passion Play, it's a sprawling, hugely ambitious endeavour in the spirit of old John McGrath 7.84 productions or Penny Woolcock's *Exodus*, in which theatre is taken out into the community and lines between audiences and performers are deliberately blurred.

Rather than trying to provide a documentary record of the event, director Dave McKean has set out to make something cinematic in its own right. Using multiple angles, music, handheld camera, elliptical editing, animation, tinting, colour grading and slow motion, he attempts to create an immersive experience. In parts, he is very successful – *The Gospel of Us* is far more striking visually than most 'filmed plays'. (There is one tremendous scene, reminiscent of moments in McKean's 2005 feature *MirrorMask*, in which Sheen's messianic 'Teacher' endures the equivalent of his temptation by Satan – he is shown standing on a skip outside a council house as fire blazes around him and a bloodied creature in a mask hollers at him.) However, it is also often very apparent that McKean doesn't have the control over the actors or the crowds that he would in a more conventional film in which he was calling all the shots.

Certain scenes – such as the Teacher feeding a swarm of followers ham sandwiches instead of bread and fishes – can't help but feel clunky. Sheen's bravura performance is often clearly aimed more at the crowd than at the camera. McKean shoots some intimate scenes with him, for example when he is alone in a prison cell or is talking direct to camera while in the 'wilderness' (living rough in the woods above Port Talbot), but there is often the sense that Sheen is improvising and that even the director isn't sure what he'll do next. At times, too, the narrative can be hard to follow, and the enigmatic chapter headings ('When the Sail Is Hoisted', 'What Was Silenced Shall Be Said') don't elucidate matters much. The basic story of the Passion Play is familiar enough, but it's not apparent what's driving Sheen and Sheers to retell it in a contemporary and secular context. Their anger at what has happened to Port Talbot is self-evident: a motorway (the M4) has cut through the town, allowing it to become just a route to somewhere else; the politicians have abandoned the people; a once thriving industrial town has been left to fester.



Town of thorns: Michael Sheen

The villains here are the well-spoken, corporate figures in suits who promise the townsfolk "subsidised food and free Xboxes in every home" in return for emasculating their community.

The film retains Christian imagery and symbolism (most notably the crucifixion itself). The Teacher's ordeal here is every bit as agonising as that undergone in Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (Sheen is beaten up in a shopping centre as the crowds watch on closed-circuit TV, then garlanded with a barbed-wire crown and forced to drag his cross up the hill before having the nails hammered into him

by men in yellow bibs who look like BT engineers). There is something engagingly surrealistic about a martyr with a crucifix walking down a high street, past the local shops. The Teacher's ordinariness is constantly emphasised. He's a man with a broken marriage and a young daughter he dotes on. Nonetheless, the idea of a Passion Play in which religion isn't foregrounded (whether to be attacked or celebrated) can't help but seem perverse. Ultimately, it's hard to work out what the Teacher stands for or just why the politicians seem so threatened by him. **Geoffrey Macnab**

CREDITS

Theatrical Performance Directed by

Bill Mitchell
Michael Sheen
Produced by
Eryl Huw Phillips
Original Script
Owen Sheers
With additional material by Dave McKean
Story
Michael Sheen
Owen Sheers
Directors of Photography
Easter 2011:
Aled Ellis
Alwyn Hughes
Andrew Lewis
Anthony Sutcliffe
Rory Taylor

Steve Davies
Tony Yates
Tudor Evans
Editor
Dave McKean
Designed by
Dave McKean
Original Music
Dave McKean
Ashley Slater
Sound Supervisor
Ian Sands
Costume Design
for National Theatre
Wales/Wildworks:
Myrddin Wannell
Sue Hill

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Production Companies
The Film Agency for
Wales and National
Theatre Wales present

in association with
Wildworks a Rondo
Media film
Supported by the
National Lottery through
the Arts Council of
Wales, The Film Agency
for Wales/Asiantaeth
Ffilm Cymru
Executive Producers
Lucy Davies
Francis Hellyer
Keith Potter

Rhys Mathews
Francine Morgan
David Rees Talbot
Kristian Phillips
Ken Tucker

In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Soda Pictures

10,782 ft +0 frames

CAST

Michael Sheen
Mathew Aubrey
David Davies
Nigel Barrett
Darren Lawrence
Jordan Bernarde
John-Paul Macleod
Di Botcher

SYNOPSIS Port Talbot, the present. A man has been missing for 40 days. The town is controlled by a sinister corporation that treats the local population with contempt. There are strange goings-on at the beach, where a stranger is seemingly baptised. A terrorist protesting against the corporation has wired up a hostage with bombs. The stranger intervenes, unbuckling the bomb jacket. He is identified as 'the Teacher', the man who has been missing. The crowd swarm around him. He walks with them and they have an improvised picnic. They look to him as a leader. He doesn't seem to recognise his own mother or daughter. The corporation is suspicious of him, and he is arrested. He faces a show trial in which he is charged with fomenting social insurrection. The townsfolk are given the choice of freeing either the Teacher or the bomber he helped to arrest. They choose the bomber. The Teacher is beaten up and taken to be crucified.

The Harsh Light of Day

United Kingdom 2012

Director: Oliver S. Milburn

The Harsh Light of Day joins a growing number of recent British films – Philip Ridley's *Heartless*, Ben Wheatley's *Kill List*, Cristian Solimeno's *The Glass Man*, Sean Hogan's *The Devil's Business* – that bring social and psychological realism into a Faustian pact with more genre-bound motifs. For in Oliver S. Milburn's feature debut, Daniel Shergold (Dan Richardson), author of a newly published occult study entitled *Dark Corners*, is about to find himself pushed into his own dark corner, as a trio of masked 'snuff' filmmakers, drawn to the lights in his cosy middle-class cottage, leave him widowed, crippled and bitterly fixated on exacting bloody revenge. Little wonder then that this troubled, downtrodden man, like the bullied Oskar in Tomas Alfredson's *Let the Right One In* (2008), should conjure up a dark stranger to help sort out his problems.

Whether Daniel's enigmatic visitor Infurnari (Giles Anderson) is real flesh and blood or merely a product of the author's shadowy imagination, this creature of the night becomes a convenient dramatic vehicle for the psychological and moral conflicts faced by Daniel, and so ends up, to borrow the description of Daniel's own writing by his publisher in the film's opening scene, "not so much disproving myths as showing their importance as fictions". With his newly acquired aversion to sunlight, his superhuman invulnerability and his predatory bloodlust, Daniel has half-willingly been turned by Infurnari into a vengeful vampire (although the word 'vampire' is never uttered in the film). It hardly matters that Daniel continues to have a reflection, is unaffected by crucifixes, and suffers from a condition that Infurnari himself insists is "not a disease... you can't get it from a bite". For Daniel's particular brand of vampirism serves as an effective metaphor for his marginalisation and impossible craving for violent retribution - and what really counts, once Daniel has willingly entered into his deal with the devil, is his struggle to remain human and to expose his darkest fantasies to the titular 'harsh light of day'.

Daniel's long dark night(s) of the soul take him from the isolated country house and coastal cliffs that are his natural haunts to the altogether less rarefied urban locations where he goes to hunt his prey. These contrasting settings (both containing their own monsters) mark a clash of class and genre, as the naturalism of lowlife criminality collides with the supernaturalism of high gothic, and the intense snuff drama of Gareth Evans's *Footsteps* (2006), the revenger's tragedy of Shane Meadows's *Dead Man's Shoes* (2004) and the home-invasion thrills of Paul Andrew Williams's *Cherry Tree Lane* (2010)



The devil hides out: Dan Richardson, Paul Jaques

are all turned into undead allegory. It is ironic, then, that Milburn's supposedly grittier *dramatis personae* – the trio of camera-happy housebreakers (Paul Jaques, Wesley McCarthy, Matthew Thom) and their gangland boss (Tim J. Henley) – prove far less convincing as characters than Daniel or even the otherworldly Infurnari (though their perfunctory dialogue and cartoonish performances might, if one were feeling generous, be regarded as reflecting the poverty of Daniel's own imagination in fleshing

out his masked assailants' existences). Yet if newcomer Milburn is at times let down by his own writing, he shows real talent in using chronological disjunctures and evocative match cuts to create an uncanny (and economic) mode of visual storytelling where in-camera trickery and intelligent editing are privileged over invasive special effects or gratuitous gore. Here vampirism is less an actual affliction than an idea of inhumanity, dispelled into thin air as reality dawns.

♦ Anton Bitel

CREDITS

Producer
Emma Biggins
Writer
Oliver S. Milburn
Director of Photography
Samuel Stewart
Original Score
Jeremy Howard
Sound Recordist
Ludovic Lasserre
Costume Designer
Nina Bertolone

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Production Companies
Multistory Films in association with Corona Pictures present
Executive Producers
Richard Johns
Rupert Jermyrn

CAST

Dan Richardson
Daniel

Niki Felstead
Maria
Sophie Linfield
Fiona
Giles Alderson
Infurnari
Paul Jaques
Tom
Wesley McCarthy
Randall
Matthew Thom
Steve
Tim J. Henley
Roy

Lockhart O'Gilvie
McMahon

In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Left Films

SYNOPSIS After the launch of his book on the occult, Daniel Shergold is left for dead (and his wife Maria beaten to death) by a gang of three masked home invaders – Tom, his brother Steve and Randall – who are videotaping 'snuff' assaults for gangster Roy.

Four months later, house- and wheelchair-bound Daniel is still traumatised by nightmare flashbacks and bitterly enraged, with carer Fiona his only link to the outside world. Late one night, on the recommendation of an occult research consultant, Daniel lets in the enigmatic Infurnari, who offers to deliver the 'monsters' who ruined Daniel's life – at a price. Daniel accepts - and wakes up alone. The next night Infurnari visits again, warning Daniel to dismiss Fiona. After devouring some raw meat from the fridge, Daniel awakens standing, but collapses before a ray of sunlight, and sleeps all day. That evening Fiona is amazed to see Daniel walking. Daniel resists attacking her, and she flees – only to be killed by Infurnari. Daniel is horrified, and after reluctantly drinking Fiona's blood, asks Infurnari to stay away.

Using supernatural predatory powers, Daniel tracks and kills Steve, leaving a message for the others to come and finish what they began. As the gang enter Daniel's dark house, with Randall still opportunistically videotaping events, an unnaturally fast assailant picks them off. Daniel is shot in the head by Tom, but doesn't die; now bound, he also survives multiple stab wounds. Infurnari appears and helps Daniel overpower and kill Roy, Tom and Randall. His bloodlust now sated, Daniel refuses to join Infurnari's circle, preferring instead to scatter Maria's ashes and mingle with them as the dawn sun disintegrates him.

Himizu

Japan 2011

Director: Sono Sion

Writer-director Sono Sion was already working on an adaptation of Furuya Minoru's *Himizu*, a manga serial of troubled youth, when the earthquake and tsunami hit Japan's eastern seaboard in March 2011. Sono's response was to rejig the project and move the story to the ravaged urban wasteland left by the disaster – and less than six months later the film premiered in competition at Venice. Some will inevitably see this as exploiting a tragic situation, yet in terms of the material at least it does seem valid to situate a drama about a teenager driven to near-psychosis by his anxieties over his future within a post-tsunami context that has highlighted those very same issues for a whole generation of Japanese.

Fifteen-year-old Sumida is abandoned by his mother and assaulted by his money-grabbing alcoholic father, but all he wants is to be left in peace to run the family boat-hire business, imagining himself a *himizu* – a mole – happily enjoying a quiet and modest life. His prospects look dicey, however, given the trading conditions in devastated Ibaraki prefecture and, worse still, he's being menaced by yakuza eager to call in the debts owed by the boy's louse of a dad, who's exasperated that Sumida wasn't killed in the disaster and strongly encourages him to kill himself so that he can collect on the insurance. In such circumstances, it's little wonder that Sumida is driven to some fairly extreme measures, and admits himself that he's struggling to get a handle on right and wrong – though all this is also evidence of Sono's characteristic penchant for savage satire that rips apart any lazy perceptions of Japanese social cohesion.

True, the film also shares a number of other rather less happy Sono traits familiar from his recent offerings *Cold Fish* (2010) and *Guilty of Romance* (2011), including over-indulgent length, a slightly plodding tempo, a fondness for clichéd western classical music (this time Barber's Adagio) and an inability to resist blackly comic japes – classmate Keiko's parents build a gallows for her so that she can kill herself too! – which prompt bewildering shifts in tone. Still, if he's not the most controlled of filmmakers, his freewheeling burlesques still somehow connect with core social issues and ask the tough questions, as in his magnum opus *Love Exposure* (2008) pondering whether religion has programmed us to believe that our sexual desires are irredeemably impure, or here in *Himizu* daring to posit the idea that Japan's youth is being seriously sold short by an acquisitive older generation too involved with its own consumer lifestyles.

It's a shame that as a viewing experience the film is often exasperating, delivering knockabout violence to the point of saturation and taking what seems like an age to unfold ➡

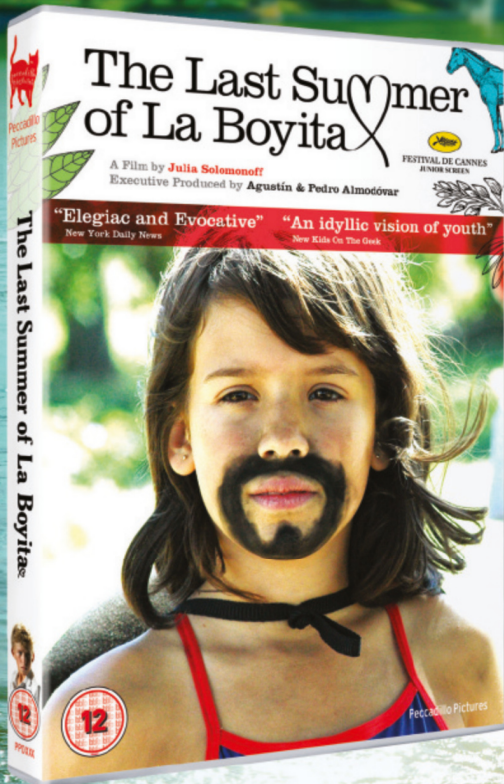
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a film by Julia Solomonoff

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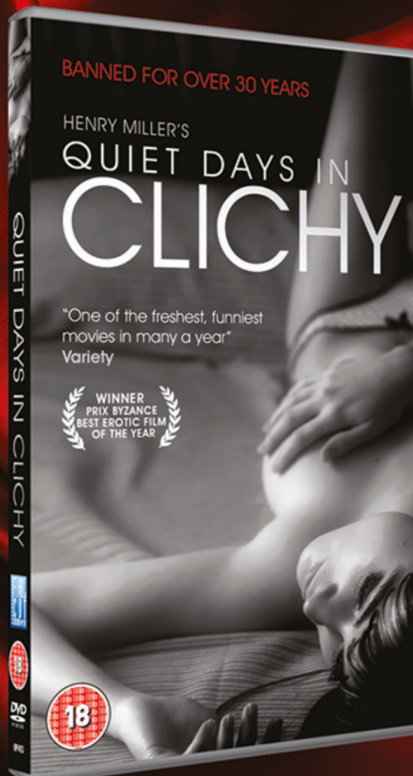
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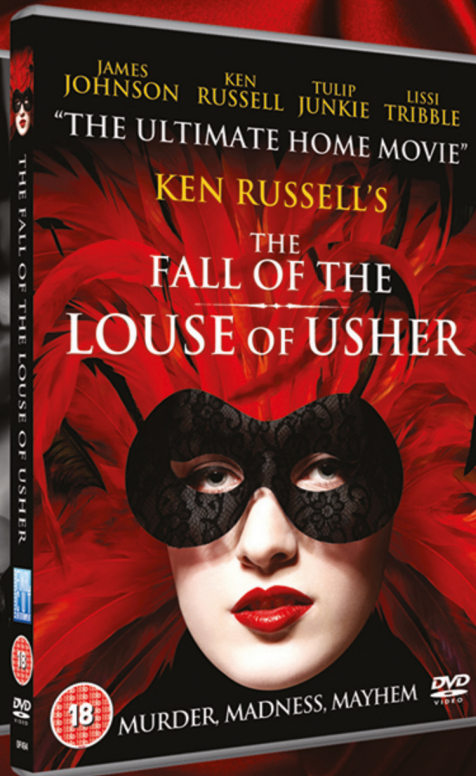
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After the storm: Makiko Watanabe

◀ a fairly simple plot whereby Keiko and a group of individuals who've lost everything in the disaster band together to help Sumida face the future. Elsewhere, maladjusted young men are cracking under the strain, prompting knife-wielding rampages entirely at odds with the all-in-it-together spirit they're being encouraged to adopt. Indeed, it's the distance between individual unease and the platitudes of conformity that Sono profitably explores. That's certainly where Sometani Shota's credible and affecting central performance comes from, yet

it also supplies the context for a surprisingly optimistic outcome in which the teacher's earlier empty sloganeering ("Don't give up!") is reappropriated into a personalised and hence genuinely valuable declaration of hope. It's a rare instance of positivity from this most acerbic observer of his homeland's manners and mores, but as the film tellingly makes clear, conjuring up optimism is not the problem in the unfolding emergency, it's finding a way of making it mean something that's the challenge.

► **Trevor Johnston**

CREDITS

Producers
Umekawa Haruo
Yamazaki Masashi
Written by
Sono Sion
Original comic by
Furuya Minoru
Cinematographer
Tanikawa Sohei
Editor
Ito Junichi
Production Designer
Matsuzuka Takashi

Music
Harada Tomohide
Sound Recording
Fukada Akira

©[TBC]
Production Company
Gaga
Chief Executive Producer
Yoda Tom
Executive Producer
Otake Satomi

CAST

Sometani Shota
Yuichi
Nikaidou Fumi
Keiko
Watanabe Tetsu
Shozo
Fukukoshi Mitsuru
Tamura Keita
Kagurazaka Megumi
Tamura Keiko
Mitsuishi Ken
Sumida's father

Denden
Keneko
Kobuzuka Yosuke
Teruhiko

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Third Window Films
Limited

If I Want to Whistle, I Whistle

Romania/Sweden 2009

Director: Florin Serban

With its conflicted male protagonist and a setting almost entirely confined to a young offenders' institution, Romanian director Florin Serban's Silver Bear-garlanded debut feature seems to be traversing very familiar terrain indeed, especially when it opens with the news that 18-year-old Silviu Chiscan is about to be released after a four-year sentence. In a more conventional film, he'd be out within the next two minutes and would spend the remaining 90 either struggling with an unfamiliar new world or returning to a life of crime, or indeed both.

But Serban proves far more interested in the process of release, explored both through monolithically inflexible official procedures and the psychological pressures placed on inmates during the last weeks of their detention. In Silviu's case, these pressures are intensified after he discovers that his estranged mother plans to take his younger brother Marius with her to Italy just days before his release, leaving him to support his seriously ill father on his own – the distaff side of the common Eastern European experience (there's little about the film that's specifically Romanian) of travelling abroad to ostensibly richer countries in search of a better life.

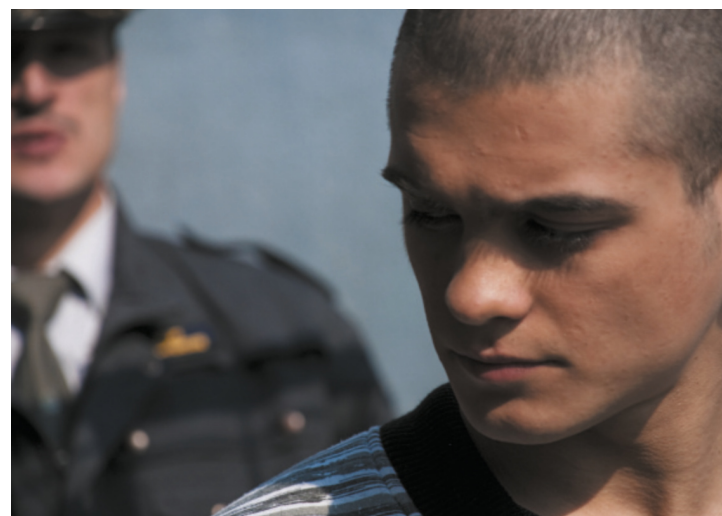
In a situation like this, inviting an attractive young woman to interview Silviu for a sociology project is lighting the proverbial blue touch-paper. Very likely a virgin, and certainly completely inexperienced with women, Silviu places Ana on an impossible pedestal, scanning her face for the slightest sign of reciprocation, translating a shy smile into a full-on seductive pout, and imagining that marriage comprises little more than endless bouts of energetic sex. The tragedy of the film's second half, in which

Silviu's obsession leads to a full-on siege, is that his actions cannot possibly have a positive outcome (the abrupt ending is not so much predictable as inevitable), and yet his reasons are all too painfully clear.

The film's visual style, with Marius Panduru's handheld camera paying much attention to the back of Silviu's head, has drawn comparisons with the work of the Dardenne brothers, but British viewers may be equally reminded of the late Alan Clarke. Like Clarke, Serban is fascinated by the way his characters walk, recognising that in an environment where speech is coded and circumscribed, it's often the most effective way of communicating. Silviu is emphatically no Carlin (*Scum*) or Trevor (*Made in Britain*) – he's clearly behaved himself inside, and has no interest in dominating his peers or challenging authority. However, it's impossible to avoid low-level confrontation, especially when his fellow inmates cynically exploit his vulnerability after the warden warns that even the slightest infraction could add two years to his sentence.

This tension pervades the film's first half: although there's little onscreen violence, the threat is ever-present, and a *trompe l'oeil* shot of apparently dangling feet is held just long enough to create the impression of a suicide before it's revealed that Silviu is performing pull-ups.

To add verisimilitude, many supporting roles were played by actual inmates, cast via drama workshops that Serban held in institutions similar to the one in the film, transported to the location under guard and encouraged to improvise: it's probably safe to assume that the more elaborately codified after-dark rituals were drawn from this research. George Pistereanu's bewildered yet charismatic performance as Silviu is outstanding, especially considering that he had even less acting experience than Tahar Rahim, his opposite number in *A Prophet*. And while Serban's film doesn't match the range and complexity of Jacques Audiard's 2009 masterpiece, it's distinctive enough from the work of his fellow Romanian New Wavers to suggest that his career should be well worth tracking. ► **Michael Brooke**



The proposition: George Pistereanu

SYNOPSIS Ibaraki prefecture, Japan, after the March 2011 tsunami. Fifteen-year-old Sumida is left alone by his dissolute mother to tend the family boat-hire business, visited occasionally by his abusive alcoholic father, who encourages his son to die so that he can claim the insurance. Sumida just wants to earn a quiet living. His stoical attitude is admired by classmate Keiko, who tries to promote his business when he quits school to look after it. Sumida has befriended several people left homeless by the tsunami; one of them, Yoruno, resolves to help when he sees yakuza Kaneko intimidating Sumida while seeking repayment from his father. Sumida snaps, murders his father during a violent struggle, then resolves to serve society by killing any malcontent making life difficult for ordinary citizens. His attempts to run amok with a blade are, however, repeatedly frustrated, and when he goes to Kaneko's office with murder in mind, he finds out that Yoruno (enlisted by a pickpocket to rob a pusher holding millions in cash) has already cleared the debt. Keiko, who knows about Sumida's father's death, is worried that Sumida might commit suicide, and tries to persuade him to hand himself over to the authorities. She says she'll await his release from jail, but he's sceptical. The next morning she hears shots outside, but Sumida is still alive. They run to the police together, shouting out their positive feelings for the future.

CREDITS

Produced by
Catalin Mitulescu
Daniel Mitulescu
Written by
Catalin Mitulescu
Florin Serban
Adapted from the play
by Andreea Valean
**Director of
Photography**
Marius Panduru
Editors
Catalin F. Cristutiu
Sorin Baican
Production Designer
Ana Ioneci
Sound
Thomas Huhn
Andreas Franck
Florin Tabacaru
Gelu Costache
Costume Designer
Augustina Stanciu

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support of Societatea
Româna de Televiziune
A film by Florin Serban
Executive Producer
Florentina Onea

CAST

George Pistereanu
Silviu
Ada Condeescu
Ana
Clara Voda
mum
Mihai Constantin
director
Marian Bratu
brother
Chilibar Papan
Ursu
Mihai Svoristeanu
Soare
Alexandru Mititelu
Finu
Cristian Dumitru
Blondu
Laurentiu Banescu
psychologist

**Dolby Digital
In Colour**

Subtitles

Distributor
Artificial Eye Film
Company

Romanian theatrical title
**Eu cand vreau sa fluier,
fluier**

Ill Manors

United Kingdom 2012

Director: Ben Drew

Certificate 18 121m 4s

"Pity the plight of young fellows," intones Mancunian punk poet John Cooper Clarke, performing as himself in the East End boozer that provides the fateful rendezvous for *Ill Manors'* intersecting characters. It's a significant scene: it establishes Clarke as a spiritual forefather for the socially conscious rap of musician Ben Drew, aka Plan B, whose debut feature this is, and it's also a deeply ironic, almost fourth-wall-breaking moment, as the film's own 'young fellows' listen reverently to Clarke's cautionary words in spite of their own earlier transgressions.

Set in the tough Forest Gate neighbourhood where he grew up, Drew's grim ensemble drama follows up a single (there's also a soundtrack album) of the same name; touching on the perceived demonisation of Britain's underclass, the 2011 London riots and empty coalition government rhetoric, it was heralded as "the greatest protest song in years" by the *Guardian*. In an interview with that newspaper, Drew cited Quentin Tarantino and Nicolas Winding Refn as touchstones for his venture into filmmaking.

Ill Manors parades these influences loudly – the multi-stranded approach and narrative/temporal tricks of *Pulp Fiction* seem an obvious template, while the humdrum ignominies of thug life are indebted to Winding Refn's gritty *Pusher* trilogy. Anchoring the assorted plotlines are Aaron (the ever-impressive Riz Ahmed), a former foster child trying to stay clean and locate his biological mother, and mate Ed (Ed Skrein), a brutish smalltime dealer. A missing phone full of vital drug contacts brings the duo into collision with the downward trajectories of others including Kirby, a sleazy former kingpin fresh out of prison, crack-addicted prostitute Michelle (Anouska Mond) and Katya (Natalie Press), a victim of Russian sex traffickers. Running parallel are the stories of Jake, a teenager tempted by the allure of gang life but balking at its reality, and Chris, seeking revenge for his sister's murder. Each of these characters is given a busily sketched backstory in the form of songs performed by Drew, which provide one

of the film's most distinctive features.

As a director, Drew is adept at inventively withholding information: the tragic import of an assassination, initially shot with a dolly fixed to the panicked hitman's face, is only fully felt when the scene is revisited from a contrasting perspective; a scene where a mother abandons her baby on a train takes on a much more sinister lustre on second glance. Such flourishes aside, it remains difficult to glean any cogent thesis from *Ill Manors*. Drew has said that he hopes to give Britain's alienated youth a voice with the project – but much of the time he seems content to pile on the misery and hopelessness without much substance. In any case, the film wears itself out eventually; a convenient conflagration at a packed pub is the stuff of an *EastEnders* Christmas special.

A striking debut in parts, but one suspects that Drew has said more on record in five minutes than he has in nearly two hours here.

✚ Matthew Taylor

CREDITS

Produced by
Atif Ghani
Written by
Ben Drew
**Director of
Photography**
Gary Shaw
Editors
Hugh Williams
David Freeman
Sotira Kyriacou
Farrah Drabu
Production Designer
Greg Shaw
**Supervising Sound
Designer**
Nick Ryan
Costume Designers
Alex Watherston
Violetta Kassapi
Katie Greengrass

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London
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Companies**
Revolver Entertainment
& Film London presents
an Airmage
production
A Microwave film in
association with BBC
Films, Plan B
Enterprises and
Gunslinger
A Ben Drew film
Produced with the
support of Film London
and with the funding
from the National
Lottery
Executive Producers
Ahmad Ahmadzadeh
Kris Thykier

Justin Marciano
Sam Eldridge
Nicky Stein
Nick Taussig

CAST

Riz Ahmed
Aaron
Ed Skrein
Ed
Natalie Press
Katya
Anouska Mond
Michelle
Lee Allen
Chris
Jo Hartley
Carol
Lee Whitlock
Vince
Dannielle Brent
Jo
Martin Serene
Will Bill
Keef Coggins
Kirby
Ryan De La Cruz
Jake
Nick Sagar
Marcel

**Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]**

Distributor
Revolver Entertainment

10,896 ft +0 frames

The Innkeepers

USA 2011

Director: Ti West

Writer-director Ti West's commitment to old-fashioned, slow-burn horror is evident from his debut feature *The Roost* (2005), a killer-bat movie, and the very assured *The House of the Devil* (2009), an expert homage to 1970s/80s lady-in-peril satanic TV movies. West's aptitude for subtle chills is even apparent in his sole attempt to get with the current genre programme, a studio-botched sequel to Eli Roth's *Cabin Fever*, and is given another workout in this careful, seemingly uneventful slacker ghost story set in a supposedly haunted Connecticut hotel that's going out of business. Unlike the recent film of *The Woman in Black*, which similarly features an angry female spectre whose appearances portend calamity, it doesn't overexpose its spook in the name of tossing a scare at the audience every few minutes. Indeed, the first half of the film boasts only one jump by way of a gag contrivance (in Val Lewton's term, a classic 'bus') centred on an Easter egg on hotel employee Luke's paranormal website.

Like *The House of the Devil*, this is built around its central performance. Sara Paxton, like Jocelin Donahue before her, is given a distinctive, unstereotyped role to play and has a believable, appealing presence that shows much more of her potential as an actress than her conventionally victimised heroine turns in the recent *Last House on the Left* remake and *Shark Night 3D*. Her character Claire is a seemingly normal if directionless young woman who turns out to be more attuned to psychic phenomena (or, in another reading, more likely to see things that aren't there) than either her co-worker Luke, who has been stringing her along as an aide on his website because he hopes she'll eventually notice he's in love with her, or than the vodka-miniature-chugging washed-up actress guest, Leane (a game Kelly McGillis, who was also in another Glass Eye Pix picture, *Stake Land*) who now practises as a crystal-dangling healer but doesn't help anyone.

Divided classically into chapters, *The Innkeepers* escalates at about the mid-point, but has laid down its themes in the wryly comic set-up scenes as Claire and Luke play games with each other (a running gag about ringing the desk bell) and idly speculate about the hotel's haunted history. West is meticulous about paying off every set-up: an early moment when Claire conscientiously locks a cellar door that has been mysteriously left open comes back to haunt her as she is trapped by the same door when the ghosts close in on her.

The film offers nuanced visual and aural chills, but what's most disturbing is the ebb and flow in Claire's relationship with Luke (who, when bruised by rejection or mockery, shows a nasty, cunning streak that isolates the

SYNOPSIS Romania, April 2009.

After serving a four-year prison sentence, 18-year-old Silviu is a fortnight from release. His little brother Marius unexpectedly visits him, to say that their estranged mother has returned after eight years and wants to emigrate to Italy, taking Marius with her. Afterwards, Silviu spots Marius getting into her car, and is beaten by the guards for straying too near the fence. The warden warns that further infractions will add two years to his sentence. Silviu is interviewed by intern Ana for her sociology project, but she rebuffs attempts at casual conversation. Silviu borrows a contraband mobile phone from fellow inmate Godson and rings his mother. She visits and says she's leaving in three days. Silviu asks her not to take Marius, blaming his present situation on his own peripatetic childhood. When she refuses, claiming that their father's illness makes him incapable of looking after Marius, the ensuing violent row is broken up by the guards. The warden denies Silviu permission for a day's leave to resolve his family issues, and Godson refuses to lend his phone again. When the follow-up interview for the sociology study is conducted by Ana's male supervisor, Silviu suddenly snaps, beating a guard unconscious and taking Ana hostage. After the warden and Silviu's mother fail to negotiate her release (despite his mother promising not to emigrate), the warden agrees to allow Silviu to take Ana out for a coffee. After an awkward, mostly silent conversation, Silviu leaves the café alone, and is arrested.

SYNOPSIS Forest Gate, London, the present. Released from prison, former drug dealer Kirby struggles to reassert his authority on the neighbourhood. He threatens Marcel, a young pretender dealing on Kirby's old turf. Short-fused pusher Ed tries to locate his missing phone. Aaron, a friend trying to stay clean and track down his biological mother, reluctantly assists. Naive teenager Jake is initiated into Marcel's gang. Ed becomes convinced that Michelle, a crack-addicted prostitute, has stolen the phone, and forces her to make it up to him by sleeping with other men. Marcel says he'll kill Jake unless he agrees to murder Kirby. Jake kills Kirby and also a teenage girl, Chanel. Ed's phone is found, and Michelle proved innocent. Chanel's brother Chris orders Jake to kill Marcel, then shoots Jake dead. Katya, a victim of Russian sex traffickers, leaves her newborn baby on a train with Aaron after failing to escape her captors. Aaron leaves the baby with Ed's sister Jody while he searches for Katya. Ed sells Katya's baby to Vince and Carol, a childless couple who own the local pub. Michelle rescues Katya from the traffickers, who are arrested. At the pub, Aaron clashes with Ed over the baby sale, and Katya demands that her child be returned. A fire breaks out; Ed dies after rescuing Katya's baby. Aaron makes contact with his mother.

girl). After the revelation that supposed ghostfinder Luke has faked previous manifestations but is now profoundly terrified, he abandons Claire just as her conscience leads her to try to help out 'the last guest'. In the end, the horror of *The Innkeepers* is classical: a woman left alone in the dark at the worst possible time.

◆◆ Kim Newman

CREDITS

Producers
Derek Curl
Larry Fessenden
Ti West
Produced by
Peter Phok
Writer
Ti West
Director of Photography
Eliot Rockett
Editor
Ti West
Production Designer
Jade Healy
Original Score
Jeff Grace
Sound Design
Graham Reznick
Costume Designer
Elisabeth Vastola

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Production Companies
Dark Sky Films presents
a Glass Eye Pix
production
A film by Ti West
Executive Producers
Malik B. Ali
Badie Ali
Hamza Ali
Greg Newman

CAST

Sara Paxton
Claire
Pat Healy
Luke
Kelly McGillis
Leanne Rease-Jones
George Riddle
old man
Lena Dunham
barista
John Speredakos
Officer Mitchell
Brenda Cooney
Madeline O'Malley

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Kaleidoscope Film
Distribution

SYNOPSIS Torrington, Connecticut, the present. The Yankee Pedlar Inn is supposedly haunted by the ghost of Madeline O'Malley, an abandoned bride who committed suicide there. The hotel is going out of business, and on its last weekend is maintained only by a skeleton staff – Luke, who also runs a website about the haunting, and Claire, who helps him out in his attempts to record Madeline's presence.

Among the hotel's few guests is Leanne Rease-Jones, a former actress who now works as a psychic healer, but she is unhelpful when Claire mentions the supernatural project. At night, Claire records the sounds of empty rooms and thinks she has managed to get aural evidence of the haunting, though surprisingly Luke isn't interested in her findings. An elderly man checks in and insists on taking the honeymoon suite (where Madeline hanged herself), though it's on a floor of the hotel that has been partially stripped. Claire becomes increasingly convinced of Madeline's presence; Luke – who admits that he faked all her previous manifestations – becomes so convinced of the haunting that he temporarily flees. He returns and persuades Claire to evacuate the hotel. She goes to the honeymoon suite and finds that the old man has killed himself. His ghost and Madeline's chase Claire into the cellar, where she dies of an asthma attack. As the bodies are taken away, Luke accuses Leanne of having foreknowledge of the tragedy and failing to intervene.

Lockout

France 2011

Directors: Stephen Saint Leger, James Mather

Certificate 15 95m 2s

"Don't get me wrong. I mean, it's a dream vacation. I go inside the maximum-security nuthouse, get past all the psychos, save the president's daughter, if she's not dead already... I'm thrilled you would think of me." Thus Guy Pearce's Snow neatly sums up both the plot of *Lockout* and his sarcastic, cavalier character. There's just one more thing: the maximum-security prison is in space, allowing this preposterous sci-fi actioner to push the boundaries of credibility with the get-out clause that nobody knows exactly how such a facility might operate in 2079, even if we're fairly certain it's not like this.

It's no great surprise that this springs from the mind of Luc Besson (*The Fifth Element*, *The Transporter*), who charges his latest discoveries, Irish co-writers James Mather and Stephen Saint Leger, with directorial duties after their promising short *Prey Alone*. What is surprising is the casting not of Jason Statham or Gerard Butler as the bulked-up action hero but Pearce, who proves to be the film's saving grace, lending the nuance and humanity that his character might have lacked in lesser hands. Pearce's wisecracking hero recalls Bruce Willis's John McClane of the *Die Hard* series, although the plot is more derivative of the 1981 John Carpenter film *Escape from New York*.

Directors Mather and Saint Leger appear more concerned with dialogue and action than plot. A subplot about a stolen suitcase scarcely involves, but the action is brisk as archetypal baddies Alex (Vincent Regan) and Hydell (Joseph Gilgun) disagree over what to do with the president's daughter Emilie (Maggie Grace) – basically, whether to rape her or use her as leverage. These warring brothers could use more backstory and screen time – like Snow and Emilie, their pasts are barely referred to – but they make a suitably menacing and refreshingly Scottish presence, even if Gilgun's accent may have US viewers requiring subtitles.

SYNOPSIS Washington DC, 2079. Former government agent Snow is convicted of murdering agent friend Frank. Flashbacks suggest that Snow is innocent but that he gained a suitcase of agency secrets from Frank during a shootout in New York, passing them to colleague Mace before his arrest. Mace hid the case in a station locker before being sent to MS One, a prison in space where 500 criminals are kept in artificial sleep. Currently touring the facility is Emilie, the daughter of President Warnock. While she is interviewing a woken prisoner, Hydell, he grabs her bodyguard's gun and forces the prison guards to wake everyone including his brother Alex, who takes control of the rioting inmates. They take staff hostage. Agent Shaw persuades President Warnock to send Snow to extract Emilie. Snow finds Emilie near death, saves her and crops and dyes her hair, but they are discovered and chased by Alex's men. Snow finds a deranged Mace, who becomes trapped. Before he dies, he tells Emilie: "I see you, I foresee you." Snow puts Emilie in an escape pod but she opts not to leave without the other hostages, although in fact Hydell kills them. On Earth, the president is overruled and a decision taken to destroy MS One; Snow and Emilie escape in spacesuit pods seconds before the prison is destroyed. They cruise to Earth, where Snow is arrested. Emilie retrieves the suitcase – the code to open it is ICU 14CU. Snow gives the case to Shaw, who opens it, unwittingly implicating himself in the conspiracy to steal secrets by his knowledge of the code. The case is empty but Snow, released, discovers a chip in a cigarette lighter given to him by Frank. Emilie is waiting for him.

Visually, *Lockout* paints its low-orbit space world in mechanical greys with bursts of red blood; effects such as spaceships are perfunctory and unimpressive. Most plot twists are strongly signalled with heavyhanded recap flashbacks, just in case the audience didn't click first time round.

Lockout isn't a subtle film, nor does its logic stand up to scrutiny. But thanks to a zippy pace, amusing dialogue and a winning performance from Pearce, it has one thing this genre too often lacks: a huge sense of fun. ◆◆ Anna Smith

CREDITS

Produced by
Marc Libert
Lella Smith
Screenplay
James Mather
Stephen Saint Leger
Luc Besson
Based on an original
idea by Luc Besson
Director of Photography
James Mather
Edited by
Eamonn Power
Camille Delamarre
Production Designer
Romek Delimata
Original Music
Composed, Arranged and Produced by
Alexandre Azaria
Sound
Stéphane Bucher
Paul Davies
Didier Lozahic
Costume Designer
Olivier Bériot
Digital Visual Effects
Windmill Lane Visual
Effects
Stunt Supervisor
Patrick Cauderlier

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Production Companies
Luc Besson presents a
EuropaCorp production
With the participation of
Canal+ and Ciné+
Produced with the
support of investment
incentives for the Irish
Film Industry provided
by the Government of
Ireland

CAST

Guy Pearce
Snow
Maggie Grace
Emilie Warnock
Vincent Regan
Alex

Joseph Gilgun
Hydell
Lennie James
Shaw
Peter Stormare
Langral
Jacky Ido
Hock
Tim Plester
Mace
Mark Tankersley
Barnes
Anne-Solenne Hatté
Kathryn
Peter Hudson
President Warnock

Dolby Digital/DTS/ SDDS
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Entertainment Film
Distributors Ltd

8,552 ft +11 frames

The Lucky One

USA 2012

Director: Scott Hicks

Certificate 12A 100m 46s

The career of bestselling novelist Nicholas Sparks is proof positive, should any be needed, that nothing succeeds like shamelessness.

The Lucky One is the seventh work from the Sparks corpus to be adapted into a feature film, each invariably keeping up a modest profit margin, since 1999's *Message in a Bottle*. Taken together, they constitute a genre unto themselves. Like its predecessors, *The Lucky One* is lacquered with the bucolic and picturesque – shot in Louisiana by DP Alar Kivilo, it abounds with golden-rimmed weeping willows, sun-dappled autumn foliage and moonlight on still bayou water. With the recent passing of mall-kiosk kitsch-vendor and 'Painter of Light' Thomas Kinkade, Sparks, through his films, may now be the world's foremost purveyor of idyllic home-sweet-home screensaver schmaltz.

Another scenic element in *The Lucky One* is *High School Musical* star Zac Efron, playing Logan Thibault. "No guy could be this good – they never are," says Taylor Schilling's love-interest Beth at one point, incredulously, to her folksy-wise and almost entirely unlined grandma, played by Blythe Danner. This is with good reason, because Logan, as conceived by Sparks, is a candidate for all-American sainthood. He has passed through three tours of duty in Iraq with a clear conscience. He's handy around the house, fixing up divorced Beth's emotionally significant boat in no time. And he's great with her seven-year-old son Ben. (For some reason, films lately prefer to illustrate this by showing adult and child playfully striking kung-fu poses – see *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*.) Even Logan's shortcomings are, in typical Sparksian style, but virtues in disguise, his oversight in mentioning the fact that he's tracked Beth down after happening upon her photograph in Iraq is excusable as he's just so tongue-tied with love. And, lest it be thought that he's just a good-looking bit of rough for Beth to rebound with, he also reveals unexpected facets that evidence his cultural finish, reading Melville and Nietzsche, and playing the piano ably.

It takes Beth some time to notice Logan's full shine, because of course he is the reserved, quietly confident, strong and silent type. This suits Efron, who is laughably unconvincing when he is called on to give a speech of any length or, really, to do anything other than obliviously, innocently flaunt his biceps. It also makes Logan a black-and-white contrast to Jay R. Ferguson's entitled, overgrown brat of an ex-husband Keith, whose father, played by Adam LeFevre, is a small-town potentate straight out of Tennessee Williams (both Keith and his dad will eventually be humanised, for Sparks, unlike Williams, has no conception of true wickedness.)

The script seems like the product of ➡



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Saved by the belle: Zac Efron, Riley Thomas Stewart

Mirror Mirror

USA 2012

Director: Tarsem Singh Dhandwar

Certificate PG 106m 4s

Fairytales abound at the cinema at the moment – everything from Catherine Hardwicke's old-school *Red Riding Hood* to the upcoming action-horror *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters*. But spring 2012 is apparently all about Snow White. This version, Tarsem's lavish, campily comic and jokily self-reflexive take on the tale, flies into the cinemas just weeks ahead of its swords-and-sorcery rival *Snow White & the Huntsman*.

Though *Mirror Mirror*'s postmodern friskiness evokes other revisionist fairytales such as *Enchanted* (2007) or girl-power fable *Ever After* (1998), the novelty here is that the Wicked Queen narrates, insistent that it's her story. And she may have a point. As fairytale scholar Maria Tatar points out, it's "the stepmother's disruptive, disturbing and divisive presence" that invests the famous 1937 Disney version with a degree of fascination. Doubly so in this instance, where Julia Roberts's vain, tax-squeezing Queen, sporting a grin as wide as her crinolines, swooshes through the film on a wave of mean-girl wisecracks and opulent costuming, the only source of energy in this gorgeous but inert adaptation. Her relentless narcissism makes the film a blunderbuss satire on baby-boomer anxieties about ageing, her guano facials, literally bee-stung lips and corsetry tortures garnering the biggest laughs.

The covert sexual competition in the Snow White story (pace Bruno Bettelheim) becomes explicit, with the cougar Queen doping Prince Alcott with 'puppy love potion' so that she can

appropriate his riches and peerless peccs by marrying him. Roberts's performance has an unabashed zest ("Time for me to get rich – I mean, hitched") that allows only Nathan Lane's panto-strength mugging as a cynical valet to register alongside her. Eager to tweak traditional stereotypes, the film lets her bitchy exuberance overpower Lily Collins's low-wattage, sword-wielding Snow White and Armie Hammer's goofy prince, while the dwarf bandits' one-trait characterisation (some things don't change) merely provides weak comic relief. Similarly, guying conventions with knowing dialogue (Prince Alcott counters Snow White's refusal to be saved by him with, "It's been focus-grouped – and it works") gives the central romance a jokey, knockabout feel that sits oddly with Tarsem's sumptuous visuals.

As in Tarsem's *The Cell* (2000) and *Immortals* (2011), the film's settings are ravishing, particularly the palace whose east-west decor is an engagingly kitsch mix of gilded French rococo and *The Thief of Bagdad*. It's a lifeless beauty, however, with everything from extravagant parties to action sequences shot for looks rather than liveliness, giving the film a sheeny, static quality. Only a slamming assault on the dwarves' forest house by a pair of giant wooden puppets gets your heart-rate up.

Fairest of them all, though, are the late Ishioka Eiko's arresting costumes, which are quirkily eloquent even when the film isn't: a ball packed with eccentric animal-themed costumes sees Snow White topped with a stuffed swan's head, and the Queen cutting through her pale-garbed guests in a red peacock gown like Bette Davis in *Jezebel* (1938). Her creations sound a refreshingly original note in a film whose playfulness rapidly becomes as tired as the conventions it is mocking.

◆◆ Kate Stables

← a random cliché generator: "This is where I come when I want to be alone," "The smallest thing can change your life," "I know she doesn't look like much, but she could really fly." But one can still be touched, or emotionally molested at least, by a film that one knows at bottom to

be emotionally manipulative piffle, if that manipulation is done with a degree of panache – Peter Weir has made a career of it. Thanks to Efron's insensate performance, however, *The Lucky One* doesn't work even on the basic level of lubricant for the tear-ducts. ◆◆ Nick Pinkerton

CREDITS

Produced by
Denise Di Novi
Kevin McCormick
Screenplay
Will Fetters
Based on the novel by
Nicholas Sparks
**Director of
Photography**
Alar Kivilo
Edited by
Scott Gray
Production Designer
Barbara Ling
Music
Mark Isham
Sound Mixer
Pud Cusack

**Costumes Designed
by**
Dayna Pink

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Entertainment Inc. (US,
Canada, Bahamas &
Bermuda)
©Village Roadshow
Films (BVI) Limited (all
other territories)
**Production
Companies**
Warner Bros. Pictures
presents in association
with Village Roadshow
Pictures a Di Novi
Pictures production
A Scott Hicks film

Executive Producers
Ravi Mehta
Alison Greenspan
Bruce Berman

CAST

Zac Efron
Sergeant Logan Thibault
Taylor Schilling
Beth Green
Blythe Danner
Elle Green
Riley Thomas Stewart
Ben
Jay R. Ferguson
Keith Clayton
Adam LeFevre
Judge Clayton

Robert Terrell Hayes
Victor
Joe Chrest
Deputy Moore
Russ Comegys
Roger Lyle

**Dolby Dolby/
Datasat/SDDS**
In Colour
Prints by
Technicolor
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Warner Bros.
Distributors (UK)

9,069 ft +0 frames



Happily ever after: 'Mirror Mirror'

SYNOPSIS Iraq, present day. The morning after a harrowing night raid, US Marine Logan Thibault narrowly escapes a mortar attack when stepping away from his post to examine a shiny object in the sand. The object turns out to be the laminated photograph of a young woman.

Returning to the US, Logan determines to track down the girl in the photograph. He finds her in rural Hamden, Louisiana. Her name is Beth; she runs a kennel and lives with her grandmother and seven-year-old son Ben, the product of a broken marriage to high-school sweetheart Keith, now the deputy sheriff. Turning up at Beth's home, Logan – reluctant to explain why he's come – accepts her grandmother's offer of a job. While working at the kennel he witnesses Keith's continued bullying. As romance slowly blossoms between Logan and Beth, she tells him about her brother, who was killed fighting in Iraq (he was the photograph's original owner). Logan also builds a rapport with Ben. A suspicious Keith begins to investigate Logan; he steals into Logan's shack and takes the photograph, which he shows to Beth, undermining her trust in Logan. After Logan helps to save Ben from a raging storm, in which Keith heroically sacrifices himself, Beth forgives him.

One year later they are living happily together as a family.

CREDITS

Produced by
Bernie Goldmann
Ryan Kavanaugh
Brett Ratner
Screenplay
Marc Klein
Jason Keller
Screen Story
Melisa Wallack
Director of Photography
Brendan Galvin
Editor
Nick Moore
Robert Duffy
Production Designer
Tom Foden
Music
Alan Menken
Production Sound Mixer/Recordist
Patrick Rousseau
Costume Designer
Ishioaka Eiko
Visual Effects
Prime Focus Film
London
Prime Focus India
Tippett Studios
Rodeo FX
Bar/Xseven VFX
Modus FX
Newbreed Visual Effects
Mokko Studio
Comen VFX
Digital Dimension
NeoReel

©Snow White
Productions, LLC
Production Companies
A Relativity Media
presentation
In association with Yuk
Films
A Goldmann Pictures,
Relativity Media, Rat
Entertainment and
Misher Films production
A film by Tarsem
Executive Producers
Tucker Tooley
Kevin Misher

Jeff Waxman
Robbie Brenner
Jamie Marshall
Jason Colbeck
Tommy Turtle
Josh Pate
John Cheng

CAST

Julia Roberts
the Queen
Lily Collins
Snow White
Armie Hammer
Prince Alcott
Nathan Lane
Brighton
Mare Winningham
baker Margaret
Michael Lerner
baron
Joey Gnoffo
Grub
Martin Klebba
Butcher
Ronald Lee Clark
Chuckles
Mark Povinelli
Half Pint
Jordan Prentice
Napoleon
Sebastian Saraceno
Wolf
Danny Woodburn
Grimm
Robert Emmis
Charles Renbock
Bonnie Bentley
Caroline, poor woman
Sean Bean
the King

Dolby Digital/Datasat
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
StudioCanal Limited
9,546 ft +0 frames

Mitsuko Delivers

Japan 2011

Director: Ishii Yuya

Ishii Yuya's terrific new movie has the pace and energy of a classic screwball comedy but a flavour all its own, a flavour we're going to have to start calling Ishii-esque. A kind of companion-piece to his earlier *Sawako Decides* (although the Japanese titles are unlike), *Mitsuko Delivers* does at least three things at once. First, it gives Naka Riisa the role of her life as Mitsuko, a young single woman in her ninth month of pregnancy, who trusts her own fate to the winds but never shrinks from bullying everyone else into sorting out their problems. While other directors flounder, Ishii goes right on creating the most interesting female characters in modern Japanese cinema. Second, it's a laceratingly precise satire of the pickled nostalgia and 'homely' working-class stereotypes found in, for example, all 49 episodes of Shochiku's *Tora-san* series. Third, it's a head-banging response to the burgeoning crisis in Japan's economy, and to the 'post-political' inertia which grips most Japanese of Ishii's generation. In short, it's quite some package.

All that we see of the father of Mitsuko's baby is a photograph: he's one of four seriously burly black guys posing for the camera. The fact that Mitsuko dated a black GI and followed him to California (where he knocked her up and dumped her) marks her out as somewhat unusual for a young Japanese woman and suggests one reason why her behaviour redefines the concept of passive aggression. Mitsuko may have been changed by her experiences abroad, but her watchword is so Japanese that it's all but impossible to translate. For Mitsuko, all human actions are either *iki* or not; she learnt the term as a child from her landlady Kiyō, a feisty old virgin (her husband was drafted and died at war before they could consummate their marriage), who was more of a mentor to her than her hopeless parents ever were. *Iki* literally means something like 'cutting a dash' (the subtitles go for "cool" in inverted commas), but it has the connotation of 'doing right by people'. Mitsuko gives it an extra spin of her own: it's okay, she thinks, to impose on other people so long as you let them impose on you in return.

The core of the film's humour is that Ishii proposes *iki* as the cure for everything from strains in the Japan-US relationship to the problem of standoffish neighbours and the phenomenon of adult males (Tora-san exemplified it) who are too emotionally inhibited to express their feelings. The *iki* solution is played out in a series of delicious visual and verbal gags and equally in the splendidly orchestrated narrative structure, which cleverly integrates flashbacks and backstories with a storytelling drive that matches Mitsuko's own bullish determination. In essence, Mitsuko unblocks the lives



Special delivery: Naka Riisa

of everyone living in the tumbledown alleyway where most of the film is set, a throwback to the days before the 'economic miracle' transplanted to the present-day world of downsizing, layoffs and broken families. The underlying emotional kick coalesces in such choices as the casting of ex-rocker Ishibashi Ryo (star of Miike's *Audition*) as the chivalrous but emotionally clueless proprietor of a run-down diner. Those who don't see many Japanese

indie movies may not realise what a blast *Mitsuko Delivers* is. While most of his contemporaries are bogged down in me-generation moping about social breakdown and the failure to communicate, Ishii Yuya offers not only Grade-A entertainment but also a well-aimed kick in the pants to defeatism. Ishii is a treasure, but then, the ten companies which chipped in to finance the film already knew that.

♦♦ Tony Rayns

CREDITS

Producers
Kogure Hiroshi
Shibahara Yūichi
Sone Sachiko
Written by
Ishii Yuya
Cinematography
Okimura Yukihiro
Editor
Sagara Naoichiro
Art Director
Maruo Tomoyuki
Music
Watanabe Takashi
Sound
Hirokazu Kato
Costume Designer
Baba Kyoko

©"Mitsuko Delivers"
Film Partners
Production Companies
A "Mitsuko Delivers"
Film Partners
presentation
Showgate, Pony
Canyon, Parco, DUB,
PIA, Nippon Planning
Center, Yahoo Japan,
Smoke, Toei Channel
Executive Producers
Fukita Michiomi
Hayashi Kazuo
Hosoji Keichi
Hyakutake Kōji
Kitano Hiroaki
Kodama Kunihiko

Mizuguchi Masahiko
Naitō Osamu
Satake Kazuyoshi
Yamazaki Kōichi

Takeuchi Miyako
Takigawa Rishō
Totsugi Shigeyuki

CAST

Naka Riisa
Mitsuko
Nakamura Aoi
Yoichi
Ishibashi Ryo
Jiro
Inagawa Miyoko
Hotaru Yūkiyō
Kondō Yoshimasa
Morioka Ryū
Namiki Shiro
Ohno Momoka
Saito Keiko

Distributor
Third Window Films
Limited

Japanese theatrical title
Hara ga kore nande

SYNOPSIS Once upon a time. Snow White, escaping from the palace where she has been confined by her stepmother the Queen, discovers Prince Alcott in the forest; he has been ambushed by dwarf bandits. Snow White confronts the Queen about her taxation of the starving populace. The Queen orders Snow White to be taken to the forest and killed. Allowed to escape, Snow White seeks refuge with the dwarves. She persuades them to return gold stolen from the Queen to the townspeople, and they train her as a bandit. The Queen dopes Prince Alcott with a love potion, intending to marry him for his money. She uses her mirror-reflection's magic powers to send giant puppets to kill the dwarves, but Snow White defeats them. Snow White kidnaps Prince Alcott just before his wedding and breaks the Queen's spell on him with love's true kiss. The Queen sets the giant Beast of the forest on both of them. As it's about to kill Snow White, she cuts off its necklace. It transforms into her father, the King, long imprisoned as the Beast by the Queen's mirror-magic. At Snow White's wedding, the disguised Queen offers Snow White a poisoned apple. Recognising her, Snow White offers her a segment first. The Queen kills herself by eating it, and her mirror-magic is shattered.

SYNOPSIS Japan, the present. Penniless and very pregnant, Hara Mitsuko is back in Tokyo on the rebound from a failed relationship with a black American GI which took her to California. Obeying a principle she learnt in her childhood from Kiyō, a feisty old landlady, she lets a benign wind guide her to a new destination... which turns out to be the tumbledown alley where she grew up, still run by Kiyō (now bedridden), but largely denuded of tenants. The headstrong Mitsuko takes matters in hand. She drums up business for the shabby diner which Yoichi (who has wanted to marry Mitsuko since childhood) has inherited from his hapless uncle Jiro. She gives the downtrodden and victimised customers new purpose in life, and attracts new tenants. She agrees to let Yoichi marry her. Learning that Jiro has been too tongue-tied for 18 years to propose to Mama-san, the charming divorcee who runs a nearby coffee-shop, and that Mama-san needs to leave to look after her ailing mother in Fukushima, Mitsuko commandeers Yoichi's van and proposes to drive everyone to Fukushima – hoping thereby to force Jiro's hand. Just then Mitsuko's parents show up, on the run from creditors, and are amazed to find her back in Japan and about to give birth. A wartime bomb buried in the alley suddenly goes off, incidentally restoring Kiyō's mobility; no one is injured. Mitsuko piles everyone into the van and drives to a farmhouse in Fukushima, where Jiro finally proposes to Mama-san and Mitsuko finally goes into labour.

Monsieur Lazhar

Canada 2011

Director: Philippe Falardeau

Canada's 2012 Oscar nominee makes neat, delicate work of the same message blared so luridly by *The Hunger Games*: that the very people who affect to impose moral guidance upon us during childhood are ushering us into an adult world of hypocrisy, mendacity and violence. The pain of coming to terms with grown-ups' unreliability and unhappiness is eloquently expressed here by some insightful and moving child performances, as a class of 11- and 12-year-olds deal with the suicide of their teacher, who has ensured lasting damage by killing herself in their classroom. Hope offers itself in the form of an affable but unconventional replacement teacher: Bachir Lazhar, an immigrant from Algeria.

What initially threatens to be a teary tale of redemption in the *Dead Poets Society* mould, with added fish-out-of-water cutesiness, takes on deeper shades of complexity as Bachir's own backstory is revealed. He came to Quebec to forge a new life for his family away from the activists who objected to his wife's political writings; but before they could join him, his wife and two daughters were killed in a suspicious house fire. Walking into a classroom of traumatised pre-teens is Bachir's way of working through his own monumental loss. And it's a risky move, since he is neither a trained teacher nor a legal citizen.

Though the warm smile and crinkly eyes of actor Fellag clearly position Bachir as a decent man, no one here is straightforwardly morally pure; and both affection and forgiveness, those Hollywood panaceas, are fraught with trouble. Bachir's wife's controversial book, we learn, spoke out against Algeria's policy of national reconciliation, which led to the pardoning of terrorists and criminal state officials alike. Bachir, too, is suspicious of blanket absolution: where others are sentimental or pious, he's quite willing to impugn the departed teacher, Martine, for what her actions have done to her erstwhile charges.



Primary care: Sophie Nélisse, Fellag

But then the relationship between teacher and pupil is itself a minefield of ambiguities. "Today you work with kids like with radioactive waste," comments one teacher as the school staff discuss the possibly inappropriate levels of physical affection displayed by Martine towards her pupils – particularly sensitive Simon (Emilien Néron), whose rejection of her hug may have triggered her suicide.

Educators are charged with teaching children correct behaviour, yet correct behaviour means radically different things to different individuals; the mysterious Martine, kept at arm's length by the narrative but a clear symbolic repository for many of its anxieties, has implicitly martyred herself to this very uncertainty. Bachir's position in the classroom is of course further complicated by his outsider status: parents have unsentimental digs about his lack of comprehension of Canadian culture, and when the one Arabic-speaking pupil in the class addresses him in their shared tongue, Bachir

anxiously exhorts him to speak only in French. (Sometimes this culture-clash thread is clumsily handled, as when Bachir's elegant Algerian snacks are favourably contrasted with a brash teacher's Rice Krispie squares.)

Based on Evelyn de la Chenelière's 2002 one-man play *Bachir Lazhar*, *Monsieur Lazhar* is slow of pace, conventional of form, and deliberate and literary in its mode of address. Some elements – the introduction, for instance, of a theme of fables about injustice, after Bachir finds a volume of La Fontaine among Martine's effects – can feel too thought through. Certain characters, such as the fellow teacher who flirts with Bachir and confuses his state of exile with her own playful adventures in world travel, too clearly exist only to emphasise his complexity. But the film's gently uncompromising take on grief, rage, responsibility and adult-child interaction has much to recommend it, and the performances are sincere and impactful.

➔ **Hannah McGill**

CREDITS

Produced by
Luc Déry
Kim McCraw
Screenplay/Dialogue
Philippe Falardeau
Based on the play
Bachir Lazhar by
Evelyn de la Chenelière
Director of Photography
Ronald Pianté
Editor
Stéphane Lafleur
Production Designer
Emmanuel Fréchette

Original Score/Music Arranged by
Martin Léon
Sound
Pierre Bertrand
Mathieu Beaudin
Sylvain Bellemare
Bernard Gariépy Strobl
Costume Designer
Francesca Chamberland

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Production Companies
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production
A film by Philippe Falardeau
Produced with the financial participation of SODEC - Société de développement des entreprises culturelles - Québec, Téléfilm Canada, Tax Credit for Film and Television - Administered by SODEC, Radio-Canada Television, Canadian Film or Video Production Tax Credit, The Harold Greenberg Fund and with the collaboration of Super Ecran - Astral Seville Pictures

Marie-Eve Beauregard
Marie-Frédérique
Louis-David Leblanc
Boris
Vincent Millard
Victor

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Soda Pictures

Canadian theatrical title
Bachir Lazhar

CAST

Fellag
Bachir Lazhar
Sophie Nélisse
Alice
Emilien Néron
Simon
Danielle Proulx
Mrs Vaillancourt
Brigitte Poupart
Claire
Louis Champagne
janitor
Jules Philip
Gaston
Francine Ruel
Mrs Dumas
Sophie Sanscartier
Audrée
Seddik Benslimane
Abdelmalek

The Pact

USA 2011

Director: Nicholas McCarthy

Certificate 15 88m 46s

The first thing that impresses about Nicholas McCarthy's ghost story/thriller, an expansion of a short film of the same title, is its low-rent California milieu. Rather than the gothic mansion of *The Haunting* or even the upscale suburban residences of the *Paranormal Activity* films, the family home that conceals homicidal and supernatural secrets is an anonymous one-storey tract house in a mildly decaying neighbourhood, part of the vast sprawl of post-industrial communities spreading out from Los Angeles. The point made is that many people still living here are ghosts well before death, hanging on after the community has started falling to pieces and so isolated that a few more disappearances are written off as natural wastage.

It's an unusual, interesting locale for horror (exploited also by Mike Flanagan's *Absentia*, another creepy missing-persons movie), and the tough, bruised, proletarian heroine and her ex-addict sister make sense as people who've come from this place and tried very hard to get away from it. Annie, well played by Caity Lotz, is a strong protagonist, confidently straddling a much bigger motorbike than she ought to be capable of handling and putting up a show of defiance against authority that suggests how difficult her family background has been. Returning home for her mother's funeral and haunted by bad memories even before the ghosts come into it, Annie is credibly imperilled, first battered and dragged about by a poltergeist who isn't so much angry as *insistent*, and then stalked by the human wraith of her serial-killing Uncle Charlie.

McCarthy never confirms or denies much of what's hinted at, so that the nature of the pact – by which the sisters' mother has sheltered her murderous brother – isn't spelled out. Are the spyholes that allow the inhabitant of the secret room to peep on everything going on in the house for his perverse pleasure? Or so that he can participate even remotely in the family life from which he is internally exiled? Has the death of his sister freed him from an obligation not to murder her children, or was the intention always to offer them up as sacrifices?

Like recent spook pictures such as *Insidious* and *The Innkeepers* (see review, p67), *The Pact* spaces out its scares – which come at an increased pace towards the climax – and trusts audiences to jump at the presence of a figure standing in the background or a door opened when the camera wasn't looking. There's also one good physical shock, which parallels a moment in *Babycall* (2011), as guest star Casper Van Dien takes a Martin Balsam-in-*Psycho*-like exit from the proceedings via a stab to the throat just as it seems that he's about to crack the case, only to turn up again later, jumbled with



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Soweto Kinch Sextet

13 July 20:00

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The Lodger

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performed live by LSO
and Nitin Sawhney

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in partnership with the BFI

21 July 19:30

Barbican Centre

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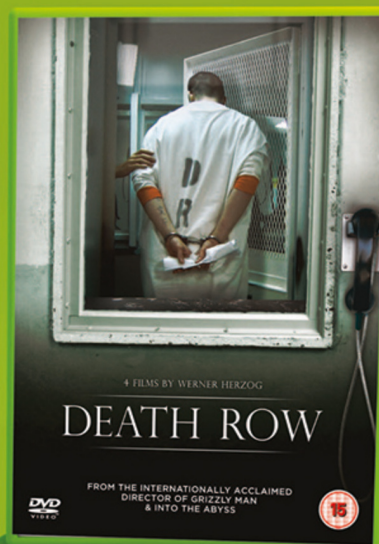


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Lottery funding through Arts Council England

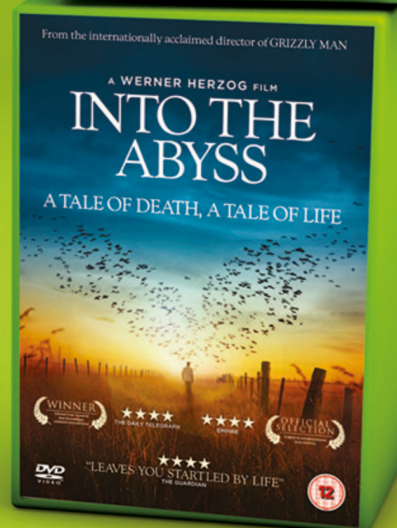
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by The Hollywood Foreign Press Association and The Film Foundation.



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the other corpses in the spacious crawlspace where the killer has made his secondary lair. A modestly effective genre movie, *The Pact* is all the more satisfying for withholding the expected post-climax lengthy explanation of what exactly has been going on in the plot, signing off with a muted emotional connection as Annie resolves to break the cycle of family horror by caring properly for her niece.

◆◆ Kim Newman

CREDITS

Produced by
Ross M. Dinerstein
Written by
Nicholas McCarthy
Director of Photography
Bridger Nielson
Edited by
Adriaan van Zyl
Production Designer
Walter Barnett
Music
Ronen Landa
Sound Mixers
Eugene Thompson
Chris Howland
Mike Colton
Costume Designer
Azalia Snail

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Production Companies
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Executive Producer
Jamie Carmichael

CAST

Caity Lotz
Annie
Haley Hudson
Stevie
Kathleen Rose Perkins
Liz
Sam Ball
Giles
Mark Steger
Charles Barlow/Judas
Dakota Bright
Eva
Agnes Bruckner
Nicole
Casper Van Dien
Creek
Petra Wright
Jennifer Glick

In Colour

Distributor
E! Films

7,989 ft + 0 frames

SYNOPSIS California, the present. Nicole, a recovered drug addict, returns to the family home after her mother's death. While chatting with her young daughter Eva via Skype, Nicole senses a presence in the house and is drawn towards a dark closet. The next day, Nicole's younger sister Annie arrives for their mother's funeral, and is unsurprised that her sibling has disappeared. The sisters' cousin Liz, with whom Nicole has left Eva, is more worried, and herself vanishes from the house. Annie reports the disappearances to Detective Creek, and becomes convinced that the house is haunted – especially when she is manipulated by an unseen force into uncovering a secret room she hadn't known about. Annie calls in Stevie, a medium, to help contact the spirit, and becomes convinced that the ghost is a onetime friend of her mother's who was a victim of Judas, a serial killer who once terrorised the area. Stevie's father is concerned that she is traumatised by the contact and refuses to let her help any further. Creek is sceptical but comes to the house, only to be stabbed to death. Annie discovers that her mother had a brother, Charles, who might also be the sisters' unknown father, and that he was probably the Judas killer. Still sensing presences in the house, Annie is attacked by Charles, who has been living in the secret room and the crawlspace, and has stashed the corpses of his recent victims there. Annie defeats and kills Charles, and resolves to look after Eva.

The Raid Redemption

Indonesia/USA/France 2011

Director: Gareth Evans

Opening with the image of a ticking watch placed beside a gun, *The Raid: Redemption* is, as those props would suggest, a tense, hyper-violent action thriller, set almost entirely in a deadly 15-storey tenement that has been built as much from the tropes and clichés of pure genre as from bricks and mortar. After bidding farewell to his heavily pregnant wife and making a promise ("I'll bring him back") whose meaning will only later become apparent, rookie cop Rama (Iko Uwais) heads off for a dawn raid on a dilapidated building populated by addicts, thugs and killers – only to find himself and a rapidly dwindling number of colleagues trapped inside and under attack from all quarters.

Already slated for sequels and an American remake before it has even had a theatrical release, *The Raid* is destined to be the breakout film of both its writer/director Gareth Evans and its extraordinary star Uwais – although Evans has in fact been trying to escape the confines of his immediate environment from the very start of his career. Though shot entirely in Wales, his 21-minute directorial debut *Samurai Monogatari* (2003) was a tribute to the *chanbara* (period swordplay films) of Kurosawa Akira, and his first feature *Footsteps* (2006), though set in Cardiff, was heavily inflected with the stylings of Tsukamoto Shinya, Kitano Takeshi and Miki Takashi. Evans's eastern orientation was finally given full vent when he was invited to Indonesia to direct a documentary on the local martial art *pencah silat*. There he met promising *silat* student Uwais and cast him in the feature *Merantau* (2009), an action vehicle clearly intended to bring both *silat* and the young star into the public eye, much as *Ong-bak* (2003) had done for Thai martial art *muay thai* and its lead Tony Jaa.

Still, it is only really with their second collaboration that Evans and Uwais have come crashing and kicking into international awareness. Its plot is an unapologetic raid on the beleaguered-in-a-building tropes of *Assault on Precinct 13* (1976), *Die Hard* (1988), *Mean Guns* (1997), *The Nest* (2002) and *The Horde* (2009), its dialogue is perfunctory, its various cops and robbers – even the morally conflicted ones – are distinguished more by their hairstyles than by their actual utterances, and the performances (ranging from badass to more badass) hardly come with nuance. Of course, none of this matters much in a film where action is both character and king – and *The Raid* delivers action so riveting and relentless that the viewer's own wincing gasps quickly become an audible counterpoint to the excellent bone-crunching foley work. There is explosive gun play, machete mayhem and a close corridor fight that out-hammers *Oldboy* (2003),



Fall guys: 'The Raid: Redemption'

as one brutal set piece careers into the next with just enough plot (and plot twist) to accommodate all the hard-hitting hurt on offer.

All this is shot by Evans's regular DP Matt Flannery in a combination of wide shots and sweaty close-ups, skilfully intercut in the editing by Evans himself to maximise the impact of the fighting skills on display. As cops and criminals

alike prove to be pawns in a broader power game, *The Raid* conceals in its crawlspace an allegory of Indonesian society trapped in the grip of corruption and forced to struggle its way out from the inside – but the film is more likely to be remembered, vividly and viscerally, for its cathartic orgy of crushing violence.

◆◆ Anton Bitel

CREDITS

Producer
Ario Sagantoro
Written by
Gareth Evans
Director of Photography
Matt Flannery
Editor
Gareth Evans
Music
Mike Shinoda
Joseph Trapanese

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Production Companies
Stage 6 Films, PT.

Merantau Films in association with XYZ Films and Celluloid Nightmares present a Gareth Evans film
Executive Producers
Rangga Maya Barack-Evans
Irwan D. Mussyry
Nate Bolotin
Todd Brown

CAST

Iko Uwais
Rama
Joe Taslim
Sergeant Jaka

Donny Alamsyah
Andi
Yayan Ruhian
Mad Dog
Pierre Gruno
Lieutenant Wahyu
Tegar Satrya
Bowo
Ray Sahetapy
Tama Riyadi

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[L85:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Momentum Pictures

Indonesian theatrical title
Serbian maut

SYNOPSIS Jakarta, present day. Rookie cop Rama heads out for a dawn raid on a tenement controlled by crime lord Tama and his right-hand men Mad Dog and Andi. Splitting into two teams, the policemen begin clearing the building floor by floor, until Tama, alerted to their presence, orders a lockdown, sending in both his own men and the building's tenants against this 'infestation'. One police group is exterminated, and the other comes under intense attack on the sixth floor. Three survivors – Sergeant Jaka, his superior Lieutenant Wahyu and officer Dogo – head one way, while Rama fights his way through a corridor of machete-wielding thugs, and then leaves his severely injured comrade Bowo with a kindly resident. To help Rama, who is in fact his estranged brother, Andi stabs his own two henchmen. Mad Dog confronts and kills Jaka. Rama rejoins Wahyu and Dogo, and they decide to continue up to Tama on the 15th floor. Meanwhile Tama confronts Andi with video evidence that he helped Rama. En route upstairs, Rama finds Mad Dog beating a chained Andi; the two brothers eventually kill Mad Dog. Reaching Tama, Wahyu – who, it transpires, is a corrupt officer – shoots Dogo, and insists Tama help him escape. Tama reveals that Wahyu's (also corrupt) superiors sent him not to kill Tama, but to be killed by him. Wahyu shoots Tama, and fails in a suicide attempt. Andi helps Rama, Bowo and the handcuffed Tama to get out of the building, but refuses to come with Rama, instead heading back inside.

Red Tails

USA 2012

Director: Anthony Hemingway

On *Red Tails*' American release earlier this year, George Lucas took to *The Daily Show* to throw brickbats at the Hollywood majors that had declined to back his long-percolating WWII flyboy saga. Lucas claimed that he was forced to fund the project himself because executives couldn't see a period action film featuring a wholly black cast being financially viable. Pre-empting critics, he happily went on to admit that the film was "corny", a rollicking gung-ho yarn in the mould of Nicholas Ray's *Flying Leathernecks* (1951).

Directed by Anthony Hemingway (with Lucas handling later reshoots), *Red Tails* blends pyrotechnics and true-life underdog heroics in fictionalising the story of the Tuskegee Airmen, America's legendary all-black fighter-pilot regiment. Undeterred by institutionalised racism – a pre-credits military stat from the 1920s deems black men mentally unfit for duty – the squadron defied the prejudice of army bureaucrats and fellow officers, and was ultimately honoured for its aerial prowess.

Publicity material for *Red Tails* has lingered on star names Terrence Howard and Cuba Gooding Jr (the latter previously appeared in a well-regarded HBO treatment of the story), but they register minimally, both playing base-bound superiors who are little more than absurdly noble ciphers. Greater emphasis is placed on a broadly drawn triumvirate of pilots: cocky daredevil Lightning, anxiety-prone captain Easy, who battles a remarkably prettified strain of alcoholism, and impertinent whippersnapper Ray Gun. After languishing on trivial sorties, the airmen leap at the chance to prove the bigots wrong: escorting bombers, going head to head with the Luftwaffe and taking out enemy bases.

The reasonably exciting dogfight sequences locate the movie's comfort zone – and, given the soulless artifice of their hi-tech equivalents in Lucas's *Star Wars* prequels, it's some relief that they're dynamically rendered. Watching these combat scenes, after so much revisionism, it feels jarring for a war film to deal in such absolutes. Lucas's fondness for adventure serials coats

everything with a Manichean simplicity; this is one true story that could happily accommodate Indiana Jones. There's certainly no trace in the film's comic-book beats of the grit and nuance of Hemingway's TV work with David Simon on *The Wire* and *Treme*.

Back on terra firma, things are marred by stolid action, dull subplots and clunky dialogue – surprising from a script by *Three Kings*' John Ridley and *The Boondocks* creator Aaron McGruder. Characterisation is limp throughout, while racism is encountered, suffered and overcome at astonishing speeds. There's no doubting the film's good intentions, and *Red Tails* functions on one level as a candyfloss-light history lesson that dodges excessive worthiness. Even so, it's a compelling story given a shallow reading.

◆◆ Matthew Taylor

CREDITS

Produced by
Rick McCallum
Charles Floyd Johnson

Screenplay
John Ridley
Aaron McGruder

Story
John Ridley
Based in part on research material from the book *Red Tails, Black Wings: The Men of America's Black Air Force* by John B. Holway

Director of Photography
John Aronson

Edited by
Michael O'Halloran
Ben Burt

Production Designer
Nicholas Palmer

Music
Terence Blanchard

Sound Recordist
Petr Forejt

Costumes
Alison Mitchell

Visual Effects and Animation
Industrial Light & Magic

Pixomondo

UPP; Prague

Rodeo FX

Rising Sun Pictures

Olin VFX

Additional Visual Effects:
Virtuos

fx3x

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Production Companies

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presents a Lucasfilm

Ltd. production

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Czech Republic from

the Film Industry

Support Program

Executive Producer
George Lucas

CAST

Nate Parker

Marty 'Easy' Julian

David Oyelowo

Joe 'Lightning' Little

Tristan Wilds

Ray 'Junior' Gannon

Ne-Yo

Andrew 'Smokey' Salem

Elijah Kelley

Samuel 'Joker' George

Andre Royo

Antwan 'Coffee' Coleman

Cliff Smith

Sticks

Marcus T. Paulk

David 'Deke' Watkins

Michael B. Jordan

Maurice Wilson

Leslie Odom Jr

Declan 'Winky' Hall

Kevin Phillips

Leon 'Neoni' Edwards

Lee Tergesen

Colonel Jack Tomlinson

Bryan Cranston

Colonel William Mortamus

Rick Otto

Flynt

Daniela Ruah

Sofia

Cuba Gooding Jr

Major Emmanuel Stance

Terrence Howard

Colonel A.J. Bullard

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

Momentum Pictures

Safe

USA 2011

Director: Boaz Yakin

Certificate 15 94m 8s

This functional thriller marks the latest chapter in one of the most perplexing directorial trajectories of recent times. Back in 1994, Boaz Yakin made his debut with *Fresh*, the story of a ghetto kid digesting life lessons from his chess-playing dad, and the sort of distinctive, character-driven indie drama that looked like it marked the emergence of a significant new voice – until, that is, Yakin's sophomore offering *A Price Above Rubies* came along three years later and proved a rather stilted portrait of female repression in New York's Orthodox Jewish community. A mainstream Hollywood sojourn followed, contrasting the solidly carpentered American football chronicle *Remember the Titans* with the resistible odd-couple chick flick *Uptown Girls*. Where could Yakin go next? Back to somewhat more personal fare, it turned out, in the shape of 2008's post-Holocaust psychodrama *Death in Love*, mixing scenes of Nazi medical experiments with the troubled modern-day protagonist's penchant for sexualised violence. Largely self-financed, it met with a chilly critical and commercial response and could have been a career-ending debacle, except that Yakin has since been working as a writer for hire (*Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*), and here reunites with his *Fresh* producer Lawrence Bender for an efficient Jason Statham flick, which seemingly underlines how commercial realities have won out over storytelling values in the years since they last collaborated.

On one level, this is unpretentious fare which plays to Statham's strengths as the taciturn outsider who turns into a one-man army battling underworld villains and corrupt officialdom while spitting out pithy one-liners ("I didn't know a trachea could break," is a highlight). Without getting too auteurist about it, it also revisits the themes of innocence and experience Yakin examined in *Fresh* and *Uptown Girls*, suggesting that Statham's up-against-it tough guy and Catherine Chan's fugitive pre-pubescent maths genius, whom he rescues from rival Russian and Chinese underworld gangs,

can learn from and draw strength from one other. What's disappointing, though, is how little Yakin does with this outline, since the two central characters have scant screen time together in which to build up any sort of thematically productive relationship. What we get instead is pretty much the same old action-movie chestnut, where a brawny star (see Messrs Seagal, Chan and Hogan) gets to expand his emotional range by bonding with a passing child actor.

Still, as essentially vacant exercises go, it shows that Yakin remains a capable pair of hands when it comes to assembling old-school action material. One subway-train-roof escapade apart, there's little very obvious CGI trickery supercharging Statham's endeavours, while the restrained colour scheme and Mark Mothersbaugh's spot-on score play the 1970s retro card with aplomb. Overall, though, as the title suggests, the film is no great stretch either for filmmaker or audience.

◆◆ Trevor Johnston

CREDITS

Produced by
Lawrence Bender
Dana Brunetti

Written by
Boaz Yakin

Director of Photography
Stefan Czapsky

Film Editor
Frederic Thoraval

Production Designer
Joseph Nemec III

Music
Mark Mothersbaugh

Sound Design
Dror Mohar

Costume Designer
Ann Roth

Action Choreographed by
Chad Stahelski

Supervising Stunt Co-ordinators
Chad Stahelski

Brad Martin

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Production Companies

IM Global presents in

association with

Automatik a Lawrence

Bender production in

association with Trigger

Street Productions

Executive Producers

Stuart Ford

Brian Kavanaugh-Jones

Kevin Spacey

Deepak Nayar

CAST

Jason Statham

Luke Wright

Robert John Burke

Captain Wolf

Chris Sarandon

Mayor Tramello

Anson Mount

Alex Rosen

James Hong

Han Jiao

Reggie Lee

Quan Chang

Sándor Técsy

Emile Docheski

Joseph Sikora

Vassily Docheski

Danny Hoch

Julius Borkow

Matt O'Toole

Detective Lasky

Catherine Chan

Mei

Dolby Digital/Datasat

In Colour

Prints by

DeLuxe

[2.35:1]

Distributor

Momentum Pictures

8,472 ft +0 frames

Jason Statham



SYNOPSIS Italy, 1944. The Tuskegee Airmen, an all-black US fighter-pilot squadron, begin combat operations. The unit – including daredevil Joe 'Lightning' Little, alcoholic captain Martin 'Easy' Julian and youngster Ray 'Ray Gun' Gannon – soon grow weary of the trifling missions allotted them by sceptical military chiefs. Lightning romances local beauty Sofia. Given a chance to provide aerial cover for an Allied beach landing, the squadron successfully sees off German planes and destroys an enemy airfield. A mission to escort bombers is another success, though Ray Gun is forced to bail out in enemy territory. Lightning vows to take fewer risks if Easy stops drinking. The squadron is invited to socialise in previously whites-only bars. Held at a POW camp, Ray Gun joins a group of prisoners plotting an escape. When the escapees are spotted, Ray Gun distracts the guards, allowing the other POWs to flee. One reaches the Tuskegee base and praises the valour of Ray Gun, who is presumed dead. Sofia accepts Lightning's proposal. For an assault on Berlin, the Airmen are assigned to escort bombers halfway before being relieved by another squadron. When the relief fails to appear, the Airmen go the distance. They repel the enemy, but Lightning is killed. Ray Gun returns to base unscathed.

SYNOPSIS New York, present day. Twelve-year-old maths genius Mei has been abducted from her home in Nanjing by Triad boss Han Jiao, who makes her memorise sensitive financial figures. Cage-fighter Luke Wright, meanwhile, is pursued by the Russian Mafia, who murder his wife and threaten to kill anyone he talks to. Mei is snatched by the same Russians, who get her to reveal a secret number before the NYPD burst in and she escapes. About to throw himself under a subway train, Luke spots Mei being pursued by Russian goons. He rescues her by taking out the henchmen, then eludes the cops in a car chase. Luke realises that Mei has memorised the combination to a safe. After a fight at a hotel, he loses contact with the girl. He subsequently discovers that the number she has memorised unlocks a safe containing \$30 million that was reclaimed from criminal sources by a covert mayoral taskforce which included Luke himself (now revealed as an undercover special agent). Luke inveigles corrupt Mayor Tramello into giving him the transaction records on a computer file. This gives Luke leverage to extricate Mei from the clutches of the mayor's fixer Rosen. After killing Rosen in a fistfight, Luke pays off the Triads with the money and drives away with Mei to Seattle, where she will enrol in a special school.

She Monkeys

Sweden/Denmark 2011

Director: Lisa Aschan

Certificate 12A 83m 27s

Set on the Swedish coast during the long white nights of summer, Lisa Aschan's eerie, ethereal debut feature *She Monkeys* is bathed in that pale half-light that makes everything spectral, and set to a soundtrack of sullen bird calls, wind-snatched murmurs and the ever-present rush of the sea. Augmented by a popping, gurgling score from Swedish band Fox Machine, the sonorous rumbling and whispering evokes an atmosphere reminiscent of Lucile Hadzihalilovic's *Innocence* (2004). As in that film, something sinister hovers in the air; we brace ourselves for horror, suspense, mystery. What we actually get is weirder, more slippery and somehow more dangerous.

Superficially, *She Monkeys* sits alongside *Innocence*, the works of Céline Sciamma, and Catherine Breillat's *A ma sœur!* (2001) as a study of girlhood and developing sexuality. Seven-year-old Sara (Isabella Lindquist) is gradually becoming aware of her body's secret pleasures and potential for shame. In the swimming-pool showers she solemnly surveys the pendulous breasts and wiry pubic thatches of grown women; at home she longs for the romantic affections of her older cousin Sebastian, whom she attempts to please with a small child's version of a sexy dance routine, tugging pants from her wiggling bum. Her teenage sister Emma (Mathilda Paradeiser) flirts with adult men, but it is the intense, rivalrous friendship with beautiful fellow gymnast Cassandra (Linda Molin) that becomes the testing ground for her burgeoning desires and growing sense of power.

Emma is a plain, silent, watchful girl. With no sign of a mother, and her father almost constantly absent, she has all the freedom of an independent adult but seems to exist in an underwater world, moving slowly, thickly – despite her physical strength – through the film's viscous atmosphere. We repeatedly see her examining herself in the steamy sea-green bathroom of the family house, but can only wonder at what she sees there. Cassandra – though older, better looking, apparently more confident – is like a looking-glass doppelganger. Consistently clad in matching clothing, with long blonde ponytails swinging behind them, the two are almost, and yet not quite, interchangeable.

While the setting may be contemporary – as sequences in municipal baths and swimwear shops make explicit – the feel here is of a fairytale land. Using a combination of close-ups and medium long shots, Aschan carves out a spooky netherworld in which nothing quite fits together. The girls themselves are frequently framed through multiple doorways and corridors, lending a sense of intangible depth. Uncanny moments abound. At times it seems that either Cassandra or Emma or both may be a variant on the *Tallemaja* of Swedish



Cassandra complex: Mathilda Paradeiser

folklore – the seductive woodland beauty who lures unwitting admirers to their deaths. All three actresses give extraordinary performances, with the two older girls practically confining their acting to the physical: Paradeiser conjures a world of tightly controlled emotion behind her impressively impassive facade, while Molin moves from malevolence to pity then vulnerability with the slightest curve of her perfect, pillowy lips.

Crafted with deceptive elegance,

riddled with gaps, *She Monkeys* is a disturbing, provocative work. The film climaxes in stolen kisses and furious violence, but at its end we are left uncertain whether Emma, so dreamlike at the best of times, has crafted her own dream version of events. *She Monkeys* turns out not to be about what happens to these young women, but rather, to borrow a phrase from Longfellow, the “inaccessible solitudes of being, the rushing of the sea-tides of the soul”.

♥ Catherine Wheatley

CREDITS

Producer
Helene Lindholm
Screenplay
Lisa Aschan
Josefine Adolfsson
Director of Photography
Linda Wassberg
Editor
Kristofer Nordin
Set Designer
Kia Nordqvist
Composer
Sami Sanpakkila
Sound Designer
Andreas Franck
Costume Designer
Kia Nordqvist

©Atmo Production AB
Production Companies
Produced within the concept 'Rookiefilm'
Produced by Atmo Production AB in co-production with Film i Väst and Swedish Television and with the support of The Swedish Film Institute (Rookiefilm Film Commissioner: Andrea Östlund)
Atmo presents
Co-producers: Film i Väst, Sveriges Television, Nordisk Film

Post Production,
Kameraten
Executive Producer
Kristina Åberg

CAST

Mathilda Paradeiser
Emma
Linda Molin
Cassandra
Isabella Lindquist
Sara
Sergej Merkusjev
Ivan
Adam Lundgren
Jens
Sigmund Hovind
Tobias
Kevin Caicedo Vega

Sebastian

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Peccadillo Pictures

7,510 ft +8 frames

Swedish theatrical title
Apflickorna
Onscreen English subtitle
She-monkeys

SYNOPSIS Sweden, the present. Fifteen-year-old Emma and her precocious seven-year-old sister Sara share a house with their often absent father. When Emma tries out for an equestrian gymnastics squad, she meets Cassandra. They form a tentative friendship, but during an outing to the local swimming baths, Cassandra pushes Emma from the high diving board, giving her a nosebleed. Later the girls are chatted up by a pair of policemen, Jens and Tobias. Sara meanwhile is chided by a lifeguard for not wearing a top and becomes self-conscious. She demands her father buy her a bikini, selecting a sexy leopard-print item.

Cassandra and Emma meet up with Jens and Tobias at the beach. Emma and Jens slip away, but are interrupted by Cassandra. She demands Jens strip before stealing his clothes and running away with a bewildered Emma. As Emma's gymnastic ability improves, the tensions between the two girls intensify. After drinking beer one evening, Cassandra makes sexual advances towards Emma, who rejects her.

When the gymnastics team for a major competition is announced, Cassandra is included; Emma is not. She avoids that evening's celebration dinner but sneaks into Cassandra's bedroom during the night to watch her sleep. Sara, left at home with her teenage cousin Sebastian, performs a sexy dance for him in her bikini before confessing her romantic feelings for him. When a discomfited Sebastian fails to reciprocate, she dismisses him.

At the stables, Emma and Cassandra argue; goaded, Emma kneecaps her rival with a pitchfork. Cassandra covers for her, telling their coach that she was kicked by a horse, and Emma assumes her place in the team.

Tales of the Night

France 2011

Director: Michel Ocelot

This beautiful little oddity of a film is the latest work from French animator Michel Ocelot (best known for *Kirikou and the Sorceress* and the picture-book-pretty *Azur and Asmar*). A compilation of fairytales depicted in flat black silhouette cut-outs against backgrounds of eye-popping pattern and colour, it's an unexpected old-school delight. (Though interestingly this time around the director combines his traditional techniques with the latest 3D.)

The film begins in an abandoned cinema in an unnamed city as dusk falls in shifting shades of grey and blue: inside, over the course of a night, a girl, a boy and an elderly man invent and act out six stories – about heartless princesses, maiden-devouring dragons, werewolves and sorcerers and enchantments. The three main characters research their stories, drawing on references you don't usually expect to stumble across in an animated film (the paintings of Roerich, the *Très riches heures du Duc de Berry*, Tibetan thangkas, the architecture of Viollet-le-duc – no dumbing-down here, that's for sure), and argue and enthuse about plotlines, costumes and roles.

Ocelot's silhouette style is frequently likened to the work of Lotte Reiniger (and there's maybe a dash of Len Lye, too, in the dazzling swooshes and splotches of background colour), but in Ocelot's films it's the eyes that have it: the only facial feature to be picked out, they often dominate the screen, which at times is entirely black but for a pair of glowing eyes; an angry crowd is simply a sea of frowns.

While the stories are charming – proper fairytales with an ever-so-slightly dark tinge to them – you might quibble about the female characters, who often seem to be either deceitful minxes or gormless girls waiting around to be rescued. (The heroine of the first tale, 'The Werewolf', is a notable exception, though she is pitted against a devious and faithless sister.) But then again, even the male characters frequently turn out to be heroes through happenstance and accident rather than bravery or brains.

The stories are set either in imaginary kingdoms (a golden city, a psychedelic land of the dead) or in the Caribbean, Tibet, medieval Europe or Africa (where Ocelot spent his childhood), with background animation drawing on the folk art of those times and places. It's hard to find a frame that isn't a thing of loveliness. Heaven knows, though, what young viewers weaned on CGI spectacle and pop-culture in-jokes will make of it. ♥ Jane Lamacraft

CREDITS

Produced by
Christophe Rossignon
Philip Boëffard
Screenplay/Dialogue
Michel Ocelot
Supervising Editor

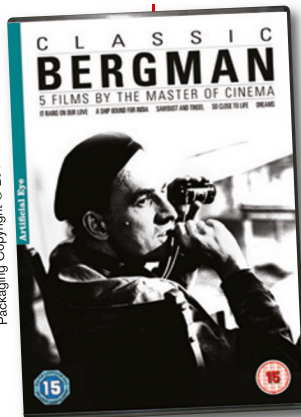
Patrick Ducruet
Art Director
Michel Ocelot
Original Music
Christian Maire
Supervising Sound Editor
Séverin Favriau

fresh produce



classic bergman
subtitled/swedish
released 28/05/12
also on Blu-ray

£30



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carancho
subtitled/spanish
released 28/05/12

£10

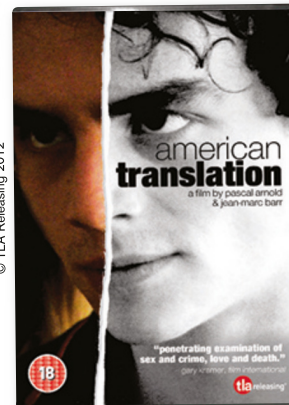
tiny furniture
released 28/05/12

£10



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american translation
subtitled/french
released 14/05/12

£10

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Cut out and keep: *Tales of the Night*

Visual Effects

Mac Giff Ligne
Supervisors:
Rodolphe Chabrier
Mathilde Germi

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Studio O, StudioCanal

Production Companies

Nord-Ouest Films and
Studio O present in co-
production with
StudioCanal
With the support of La
Région Île-de-France
With the participation of
Centre national de la
cinématographie
Executive Producer
Eve Machuel

Christophe Rossignon

Michel Ocelot
Firmine Richard
Serge Feuillard

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[1.85:1]

3D

Subtitles

Distributor

Soda Pictures

French theatrical title

Les Contes de la nuit

VOICE CAST

Marine Grisot
Julien Beramís
Yves Barsacq
Olivier Clavierie
Michel Elias
Isabelle Guirard
Olivia Brunaux
Louise Rossignon

SYNOPSIS Over the course of a night, in an abandoned cinema, a boy, a girl and an elderly man devise and act out six fairytales.

In the first tale, Yann is betrothed to the king's eldest daughter, though it is her sister who truly loves him. When Yann confesses to his fiancée that he is a werewolf, she traps him in his werewolf form; her sister returns him to human form, and declares her love. In the second tale, a young man descends into the underworld and completes three tasks set by the King of the Dead. The third story is set in a golden city where girls are sacrificed to a dragon in exchange for gold; a young man falls in love with one of the chosen victims, slays the dragon and frees the city. The fourth tale tells of a boy who has a magic drum that makes everyone dance; when his village is attacked, enemy soldiers destroy the drum. However, it is the boy's playing that's magical, not the drum: his drumming sends the enemy dancing away. In the fifth tale, a king has a talking stallion; another king has a singing mare. The first king boasts that he has something even more miraculous: a servant who never lies. The second king's daughter tries to trick the servant into lying, with tragic results. In the last story, an architect's son frees the woman he loves from an enchantment that has turned her into a crow.

Transit

USA 2011

Director: Antonio Negret

Certificate: not submitted 84m

Like *The River Wild* (1994) before it, this hyperventilating thriller commingles the fortunes of an estranged family on a camping trip and a gang of criminals on the lam after a violent robbery. To evade detection at police roadblocks, Marek (James Frain) and his murderous cohorts stash their \$4 million loot on the roof-rack of a family car at a service station. Nate Sidwell (Jim Caviezel) is taking his wife and sons for some quality time to make up for the period he's spent in prison for a real-estate scam, but they soon find themselves being aggressively chased along Louisiana's bayou backroads by the gang wanting their money back.

There's a symmetry between these two interchangeably unpleasant foursomes that's symptomatic of underwriting: the bestubbed patriarchs vaguely resemble one another in Yaron Levy's dark, contrasty cinematography; Nate's untrusting wife Robyn (Elisabeth Röhm) and Marek's robust moll Arielle (Diora Baird) are both vest-wearing blondes, equally adept at handling a firearm or driving at speed; and in the backseat there's the 'kids'. Nate's sons Shane (Sterling Knight) and Kenny (Jake Cherry) are rote film teenagers, as resistant to dad's choice of in-car listening as to his attempts to make emotional amends; Marek, meanwhile, has his hands full keeping glowering crony Losada (Harold Perrineau) and getaway driver Evers (Ryan Donowho) in check. Losada's bids for dominance undermine the thieves' solidarity even as Shane's resentment against his father threatens to destroy the Sidwell family.

Suffice to say, director Antonio Negret has something more pulse-racing on his mind than mirror-image Freudian paternal conflicts. From the outset, the action barely stops for breath, with high-speed pursuit following brutal hand-to-hand skirmish and swamp-shack siege following motel-room break-in. With an appealing B-movie economy, the drama plays out almost entirely along one stretch of road, with the waterlogged

SYNOPSIS Louisiana, the present. A gang of robbers led by Marek ambush an armoured security van, stealing \$4 million. At a service station, they conceal the money among the luggage on the roof-rack of another car. The car belongs to the estranged Sidwell family – Nate, Robyn and teenage sons Shane and Kenny – who are on a camping trip that is intended to reunite them. The robbers catch up with the Sidwells and try to run them off the road to regain their loot. During the ensuing chase, Nate is arrested and taken into custody by a traffic policeman. Having spent time in prison for fraud, Nate tells the police that if he is charged he will be violating parole. When the police hear about an attack on the motel where Robyn, Shane and Kenny are spending the night, Nate is freed.

When Robyn discovers the bag of money on the roof-rack, she presumes that her ex-con husband is in league with the thieves and abandons him on the road. Marek's gang intercept Robyn and her sons; Robyn tells them that Nate has the money. Holding the family captive, the gang find Nate and demand the stash back. Nate tries to bargain for the release of his family but can't find the money, which he had temporarily concealed. Exploiting tensions among the thieves, Nate escapes with his family. The continuing chase leads to an old shack in the bayou where Robyn finds the money. Marek and his gang lay siege to the shack but are repelled by Robyn and her sons. Nate wins a final bloody fight with Marek, regaining the trust of his family.



Bayou bonus: Jim Caviezel

bayous to either side, as the tortuous plot finds the cars repeatedly doubling back on themselves in search of someone or something left behind, including – in the film's brief final shot – the wedding ring that had hitherto fallen off an amputated finger. But Levy's penchant for filming simple establishing shots as if he's Peter Jackson swooping over the New Zealand highlands, and the fast and furious editing that disjoins space and coherence with remorseless energy, make *Transit's* pulpy pleasures difficult to warm to.

♦ Samuel Wigley

CREDITS

Produced by

Courtney Solomon

Moshe Diamant

Written by

Michael Gilvary

Director of Photography

Yaron Levy

Editor

William Yeh

Production Designer

Nate Jones

Music

Chris Westlake

Sound Mixers

Matt Sanchez

Michael Russo

Costume Designer

Kim Martinez

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Production Companies

After Dark Films

presents an After Dark

Films and Signature

Entertainment

production

A film by Antonio Negret

Co-produced by Bettis

Productions Limited

and Curtis Productions

Limited

In association with The

Fyzz Facility Limited

Executive Producers

Michael Gaeta

Alison Rosenzweig

Allan Zeman

Joel Silver

CAST

Jim Caviezel

Nate

James Frain

Marek

Diora Baird

Arielle

Elisabeth Röhm

Robyn

Ryan Donowho

Evers

Sterling Knight

Shane

Harold Perrineau

Losada

Jake Cherry

Kenny

Griff Furst

Lieutenant B. Morgan

J.D. Evermore

Sergeant Doucette

Rob Boltin

Sergeant Spurlock

Douglas M. Griffin

Lieutenant Paolo

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

G2 Pictures

Not submitted for

theatrical classification

Video certificate: 15

Running time: 84m 16s

The Turin Horse

Hungary/France/

Switzerland/Germany 2011

Director: Béla Tarr

Certificate 15 154m 37s

The inevitable question confronting any artist of stature as the twilight years close in: will the inspiration fade away; and if so when? And concomitantly: should I call time, and if so when? Some directors have of course produced great work near or right up to the end; others, arguably a larger cohort, have ploughed on (are ploughing on) regardless of – perhaps blissfully unaware of – pronounced creative decline. Manoel de Oliveira, still writing and directing bewitching films in his 104th year, seems like some magnificent but bewildering freak of nature.

Despite being only a little more than half Oliveira's age, the Hungarian Béla Tarr, another monumental figure in the history of cinema, has nevertheless decided that *The Turin Horse* will be his final film, and that after eight features – including the seven-and-a-half-hour *Sátántangó*, his undisputed pinnacle – he feels he's now said everything he has to say. *The Turin Horse* in fact opens with another creative terminus that colours everything after it: a spoken prologue over a black screen relating the apocryphal tale of Friedrich Nietzsche's encounter with a horse being beaten by its owner on a Turin street in 1889, leading to a negative epiphany that instigated a breakdown and the end of his writing career.

The first images we see – the most striking in the whole film – fix on a horse, seemingly chosen for its air of bedraggled melancholy, pulling a cart driven by the Moses-like patriarch Ohlsdorfer, while the camera circles it almost caressingly. Is this the same horse? Or some symbol of earthly suffering à la Balthazar? Ohlsdorfer, lame in one arm, barely subsists on an isolated farm with his daughter, on whom he depends for fetching well-water and feeding and dressing him, each ritualised routine repeated several times with slight variations in camera angle and perspective. Ohlsdorfer feels more sharply etched owing to his bigotry, irascibility and anxious wolfing of food. Father and daughter speak little, and both spend inordinate amounts of time staring silently out of the window, shrouded in utmost misery, at a storm-tossed, empty world outside.

The film is shot in black and white and divided into chapters denoting six consecutive days, during which a slow but implacable dismantling of their universe takes place, akin to some muted horror film. At first the horse refuses to move and eat, disrupting their work patterns at a stroke; then the primary life and energy sources are snatched from them. It's like some inverse, entropic parody of God's creation; the seventh day here will presumably open up a void, or usher in death. Mid-point, a neighbour drops in to decry the world's ruination,



The cart before the horse: Erika Bók

delivering a brilliantly scripted speech bristling with apocalyptic warnings and nihilistic pronouncements about God's "ghastly creation".

As with all Tarr's later, allegorically inclined films, it's open to multiple interpretations, but given this is the director's swansong, it's tempting to regard it as a staging of, a meditation on, creative impasse or artistic decline. Apart from the link to Nietzsche's predicament, there are obvious metaphors – the drying of the well, the dying of the light; by the same token, the horse's refusal to move or eat seems symbolic of some severed link with the world, a closing down of options. If it's almost certainly Tarr's most stripped-down, cloistered, concentrated film, it also feels like his most introspective and personal work.

Another tendency when directors sign off for good: the rush to declare the last film a masterpiece; and so it's proved here. After two viewings, and despite having long been a fanatical

Tarr acolyte, it's difficult to concur. Some magic seems to have definitively gone, as it had in the previous film *The Man from London* (2007). There are very very few images or scenes here reverberating with that mysterious, mesmerising charge and intensity that Tarr and his collaborators could seemingly summon at will in his greatest films. The misery can feel laid on a bit too heavily at times, and the repetitions – of musical motifs, but principally the characters' routines – produce only a wearying sense of diminishing returns. And yet, and yet... let's face it, it's still head and shoulders above almost everything else out there, with one saving grace in particular: a shared apprehension of rupture, closure – the sense of an ending – that brings Tarr into much closer alignment with his characters and their plight than he's arguably ever been before, making this his most direct and overtly compassionate film.

🔴 Kieron Corless

CREDITS

Co-director

Ágnes Hranitzky

Produced by

Gábor Téni
Marie-Pierre Macia
Juliette Lepoutre
Ruth Waldburger
Martin Hagemann

Written by

László Krasznahorkai
Béla Tarr

Director of Photography

Fred Kélemen
Editor

Ágnes Hranitzky

Art Director

Sándor Kállay

Music

Mihály Vig

Sound Mixer

Gábor Erdélyi Jr

Costumes

János Breckl

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Film, Vega Film, zero

fiction film

Production Companies

T.T.Filmmuhely, MPM
Film, Vega Film, zero

fiction film

Executive producers:

Werc Werk Works

Executive Producers

Elizabeth G. Redleaf

Christine K. Walker

CAST

Erika Bók

Ohlsdorfer's daughter

János Derzsi

Ohlsdorfer

Mihály Kormos

Bernhard, neighbour

Ricsi

horse

Mihály Raday

voice-over

Dolby Digital

In Black and White

[L661]

Subtitles

Distributor

Artificial Eye Film

Company

13,915 ft +8 frames

Hungarian theatrical title

A Torinói ló

2 Days in New York

Director: Julie Delpy

Certificate 15 95m 40s

Julie Delpy's nicely rough-edged 2007 relationship comedy *2 Days in Paris* felt like a robustly affectionate response to the heady romance of *Before Sunrise* (1995) and *Before Sunset* (2004), showing the quarrelsome day-to-day compromises of coupledom. In this amiable, crowded and undeniably samey sequel, Marion is settled in New York with easygoing radio host Mingus and their respective children, when a visit from her flamboyantly French family stretches things to breaking point.

Delpy, still fascinated by the disparity between French and American mores, uses the same ingredients as before (comic culture clashes and couple-versus-family stresses) but with somewhat less success. Firstly, and problematically, she sets her Woody Allen-inflected story on the maestro's home turf. Where *2 Days in Paris* played like a garlicky, amusingly Gallic variation on *Annie Hall*, this time around the film seems more a Woody-wannabe, with its New York locations, neurotic heroine and squabbling sisters. Thankfully, it has its own visual manner, shooting the family so closely that you feel you too are rooming with them, while their relentless bickering crowds the air. For a bilingual movie, it's nicely fluid, using both languages to show how Marion skips – and slips – between two cultures. There's a wickedly funny dinner where she and her manipulative sister Rose go head to head in furious French, while her ex-lover Manu mistranslates Mingus's English into bizarre non sequiturs.

Chris Rock, for once playing the straight man, is an interesting choice of male lead, not only because the interracial component of the relationship is largely ignored in a

way that's still surprisingly rare in indie cinema. Like Delpy, his outsider persona resonates with the film's themes (he's a fearless dissector of male-female dynamics in his stand-up shows, and explored married restlessness in his 2007 Rohmer remake *I Think I Love My Wife*). Yet here he dials it right down, letting Albert Delpy's aged hippie Jeannot and Alexia Landeau's minxy Rose bounce the film's predictable comic confrontations off him. Where the French performances are outsize, squeezing every titter from stereotypical clashes over their sexual abandon, feckless dope-smoking and conversational arrogance, Rock's Mingus is a study in confident underplaying. Delpy, whose Marion moves from loveable kook to the kind of tightly wound drama queen who fakes a brain tumour to dodge a neighbour's ire and sells her soul as a conceptual art piece, could have taken a leaf out of his book. Her characterisation has the same crammed, self-consciously scrapbooked feel as the film, which occasionally breaks into a narrated flashback, dream sequence or whimsical hand-puppet show. There's even, at one heart-sinking point, a charming if arch montage of personal history and found photos, which feels as if a Flickr feed has escaped into the feature.

Where *2 Days in Paris* had a winning, one-note simplicity, *2 Days in New York* feels compelled to take on a clutch of soft targets in addition to the frolicking French. Neither its mockery of the New York art world nor the headaches of joint child custody ("Goodnight, fake Daddy") do more than distract from the central theme. When Marion engages in a sombre argument with Vincent Gallo to try to regain the soul he has purchased from her, the film dawdles, but then races into an oddly sitcom ending as Mingus and her family rescue her from a screwball escapade in Central Park. Despite its celebration of the emotional untidiness of family life, the film somehow can't resist this neatest of endings.

🔴 Kate Stables



Connective tissue: Chris Rock and Julie Delpy

SYNOPSIS Over a blank screen, a narrator relates how, on 3 January 1889, Friedrich Nietzsche saw a horse being whipped on a Turin street, threw his arms around its neck and started sobbing. After two days of silent isolation Nietzsche uttered the words: "Mutter, ich bin dumm" ("Mother, I am stupid"). He spent the next ten years, his last, in the care of his mother and sister, and never wrote again.

Hungary. A horse pulls a cart driven by the elderly Ohlsdorfer to the isolated rural house he lives in with his grown-up daughter. Henceforth the film is divided into chapters corresponding to six consecutive days. On each day, Ohlsdorfer's daughter dresses him (he is lame in one arm), fetches water from the nearby well and cooks potatoes. Both carry out domestic chores, tend the horse and stare often out of the window. High winds rage outside. On day one, they notice that the woodworm have stopped making noises. On day two, the horse refuses to move. A neighbour, Bernhard, comes to buy brandy. He tells them that the nearby town has blown away, and that everything in the world has become debased and ruined. On day three the horse stops eating. A group of gypsies arrive and drink from the well; Ohlsdorfer chases them away. On day four, Ohlsdorfer and his daughter discover that the well has run dry. The horse still refuses to eat or drink. Ohlsdorfer decides they should pack up and leave, but they travel hardly any distance before returning. On day five, the lamps won't light. The storm ends. On day six, they sit at the table, with only raw potatoes to eat.

CREDITS

Producers
Christophe Mazodier
Scott Franklin
Julie Delpy
Ulif Israel
Hubert Toint
Jean-Jacques Neira

Screenplay
Julie Delpy
Alexia Landeau

Story
Julie Delpy
Alexia Landeau
Alex Nahon
Based on original characters by Julie Delpy

Director of Photography
Lubomir Bakchev
Production Designer
Judy Rhee

Editor
Isabelle Devick
Sound
Joshua Anderson
Gert Janssen
Franco Piscopo
Costume Designer
Rebecca Hotherr

©[TBC]
Production Companies
A Polaris production in co-production with Tempête sous un Crane, Senator Film, Saga Film, Alvy Productions, Inroduction, TDY Film Produktion, BNP Paribas Film Fund
In association with Protozoa Pictures
Executive Producers
Helge Sasse
Matthias Triebel

CAST

Julie Delpy
Marion
Chris Rock
Mingus
Albert Delpy

Jeannot
Alexia Landeau
Rose
Alex Nahon
Manu
Dylan Baker
Ron
Kate Burton
Bella
Daniel Brühl
Lukas
Emily Wagner
Susan

[uncredited]
Vincent Gallo
The mysterious buyer

Distributor
Network Releasing

In Colour
[1.85:1]
Subtitles

8,610 ft +0 frames

Victim

United Kingdom 2012

Director: Alex Pillai

This debut feature falls between two genres that have emerged with great success in recent years. Partly an attempt at a hard-hitting British urban youth thriller in the style of *Kidulthood* (2006), partly inspired by more recent releases such as *Attack the Block* (2011), *Victim* is a confusing cocktail of the two.

Alex Pillai's film, written by Ashley Chin and Michael Maris, imagines the lives of three young men, all plagued by debt, responsibility and the egotism of gang culture. Its central narrative – Tyson's struggle to care for his little sister Nyla and repay the debts left by his drug-addicted mother – is bland, peppered only with occasional sparks of humour provided by cocky sidekick Jason or Nyla's adolescent moralising.

Where *Kidulthood* was thrilling for its excruciating, relentless parade of violent urban youth, glamorised and feared by mainstream culture, *Attack the Block* provided a sharp satire of that world, tipping the fear on its head and offering an audaciously optimistic view of the lives of the 'yout': the aliens raining down on a South London estate weren't disillusioned kids, as the media would later suggest in the aftermath of the summer riots, but rather dribbling, shaggy monsters, conquered by a misfit gang who 'tooled up' and protected their community.

Victim, by contrast, is neither a harrowing insight into a hidden world nor sharp satire; instead it offers only rudimentary complications of social and narrative convention. In the film's denouement, an innocent girl is shot dead – yet the perpetrators are not the armed gang members but rather her jealous ex-boyfriend, a wealthy boy who uses his father's shotgun.

Filmed in a particularly soulless part of London – the newly redeveloped Docklands – the film lacks the inner-city grit that provided the convincing geography and texture of *Kidulthood* and *Attack the Block*. While attempting to portray inner-city life, *Victim* instead illuminates the strange irony of London's redeveloped pockets – absentee-investor-landlord deserts

SYNOPSIS London, the present. In a stylish housing estate in Docklands, three men dressed as street cleaners burst into a wealthy man's flat and break open his safe. The robbers are Tyson, Jason and Mannie.

They celebrate the success of the robbery in their accomplice Davina's house. Davina's cousin Tia arrives. Tia is from a wealthy family in the country; she makes an impression on the young men, particularly their leader Tyson. Tyson leaves the party to collect his little sister Nyla from school. Since their mother abandoned them, Tyson is her carer. Nyla disapproves of his criminality.

The team commit another robbery after preying on three wealthy men in a glamorous club. Tyson has now stolen enough money to clear the debts his mother has left him; he vows that he will turn away from crime. He hides the money in his flat, but returns from an afternoon with Tia to discover that his mother has stolen it. Tyson agrees to participate in one last robbery, organised by Davina, who has grown jealous of his friendship with Tia. The group break into a house, armed with guns; it is Tia's home. Tyson returns to Tia's house the following day to confess his involvement in the robbery, and to admit his feelings for her. Tia's ex-boyfriend arrives and shoots her dead. Tyson returns to London, and finds that bailiffs have taken his belongings.



Robbin' hoods: 'Victim'

in the city, devoid of character and reflecting the blankness of the characters' motives. But perhaps *Victim* is a truthfully ordinary reflection of the pressures of contemporary society and its changing geography, symptomatic of the endless grind to pay our debts while the city around us becomes polished into a uniform, consumer-oriented village. It's a particularly apt reflection in the run-up to the Olympic Games and the proclaimed transformation of East London.

🔴 Basia Lewandowska Cummings

CREDITS

Produced by
Danny Donnelly
Jason Maza
Written by
Ashley Chin
Michael Maris
with
Michael Kyei
Adrian Scott
Director of Photography
Peter Butler
Editor
Will Gilbey
Production Designer
Lucy Gahagan
Music
Howard Rees
Sound Recordist
Matthew Weeks

©Pure Film Productions Ltd
Production Company
Pure Films presents a Pure Films production
Executive Producers
Danny Donnelly
Justin King

CAST

Ashley Chin
Tyson
Ashley Madekwe
Tia
Jason Maza
Mannie

Michael Maris
Jason
David Harewood
Mr Ansah
Adam Deacon
Zhartash
Frank Harper
Colin
Richie Campbell
Joseph
Giggs
Fat Justin
Letitia Wright
Nyla
Shanika Warren-Markland
Charmaine
Anna Nightingale
Davina

In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Kaleidoscope Film Distribution

Woody Allen: A Documentary

USA 2011

Director: Robert B. Weide

Robert B. Weide's documentary about Woody Allen isn't exactly critical. Weide (best known for directing TV's *Curb Your Enthusiasm*) is clearly a diehard Allen devotee, and there is no probing here into such murky matters as the Soon-Yi scandal (although it is mentioned and noted admiringly that Allen continued working as normal even as his custody battle with his former partner Mia Farrow was raging). Instead, Weide lovingly and painstakingly tells the story of how Allen blossomed as a filmmaker.

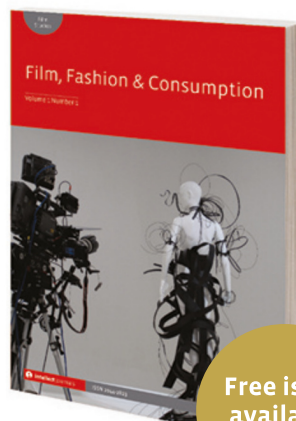
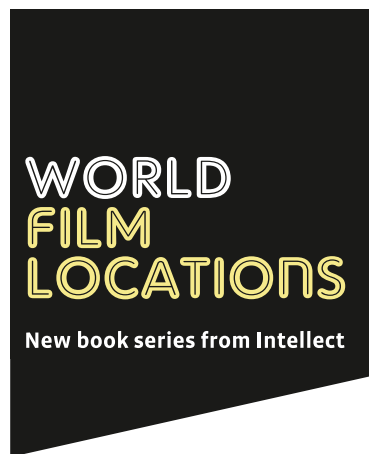
Allen's route to success was surprisingly smooth. As a teenager, he was already out-earning his parents by selling jokes. He became a successful comedian (though he didn't enjoy performing) and then wrote the screenplay for *What's New Pussycat?* (1965). Allen was so disappointed by the way the Hollywood studio mangled his material that he resolved to hold on to creative control by directing his subsequent screenplays himself. His debut, *Take the Money and Run* (1969), was so successful that he immediately achieved a level of creative control his contemporaries could only envy. (Stanley Kubrick had a similar autonomy but he didn't go on to make some 50 feature films.)

The film includes Allen's own footage of his mother Nettie, a wonderfully opinionated figure in huge spectacles who suggests that Woody would have been "warmer" if she hadn't been so strict with him. That coldness, though, is at the root of his creativity. We may have the impression from Allen's films that he is a supremely neurotic figure, but Weide's documentary suggests otherwise. He is a man of habit: for half a century, he has blithely carried on writing jokes and screenplays on the same old Olympia typewriter; he plays jazz every Monday night. He doesn't seem prey to remorse or regret – nor, despite his admiration for Ingmar Bergman, is he much given to introspection. He tells Weide that he does very little preparation for his films and rarely rehearses: "It's not rocket science. This is not quantum physics. If you are the writer of the story, you know what you want the audience to see because you have written it. It is just storytelling."

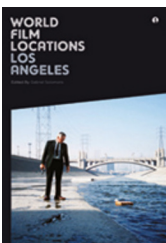
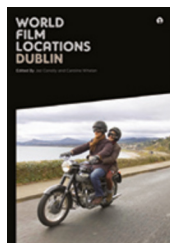
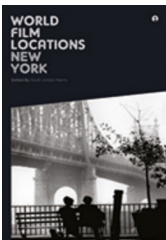
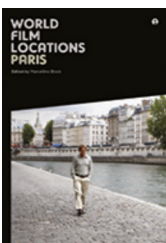
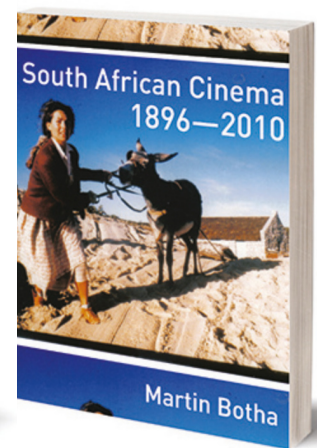
Allen is so protective of his privacy that he doesn't seek any emotional engagement with his collaborators. Casting sessions last only a few minutes; scripts are dispatched by dead of night, with actors given only a few hours to read them – they're either in or out. His basic working method is to "hire great people" and then leave them to their own devices. If it works, it works. If it doesn't, he might just start from scratch all over again. (Michael Keaton didn't feel right for *Purple Rose of Cairo* so he hired Jeff Daniels instead; he wasn't happy with the way *September* turned

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Film, Fashion & Consumption

Principal Editor
Pamela Church Gibson
ISSN 20442823

Film, Fashion & Consumption is a peer-reviewed journal designed to provide an arena for the discussion of research, methods and practice within and between the fields of film, fashion, design, history, art history and heritage. The journal seeks to stimulate ongoing research on these topics and to attract contributions not only from scholars researching in these areas but also from practitioners, who are traditionally excluded from academic debate.

Flesh Into Light The Films of Amy Greenfield

By Robert Haller
ISBN 9781841504889 | PB | £19.95

Since 1970 Amy Greenfield has developed a new language, for film and electronic media, of the body in motion. This language evokes primal inner experience and a woman's representation of the body: poetic, often nude, and timeless. This book explores the innovative work of a pioneer in a little-understood American art.

South African Cinema 1896-2010

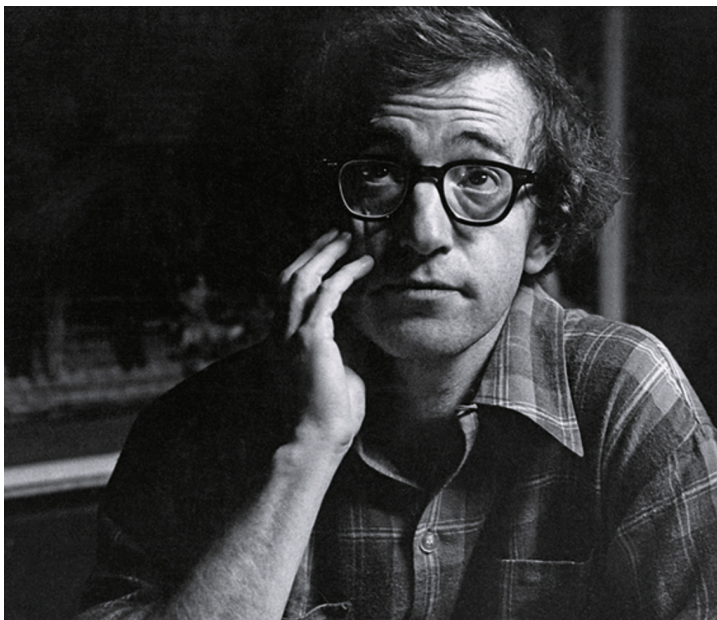
By Martin Botha
ISBN 9781841504582 | PB | £29.95

Taking an inclusive approach to South African film history, this volume represents an ambitious attempt to analyze and place in appropriate sociopolitical context the aesthetic highlights of South African cinema from 1896 to the present. Thoroughly researched and fully documented by renowned film scholar Martin Botha, the book focuses on the many highly creative uses of cinematic form, style, and genre as set against South Africa's complex and often turbulent social and political landscape.

Coming soon: Istanbul, Vienna,
Madrid, Las Vegas and New Orleans.



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Editing suite and lowdown: Woody Allen

out originally, so he simply shot it all over again with a new cast.) At the same time, if he thinks it's worth the effort, as both Dianne Wiest (star of *Bullets over Broadway*) and Mariel Hemingway (so touching as the ingénue in *Manhattan*) testify, he'll do everything he can to enable his actors to give the best performance possible.

Weide's documentary (made for the American Masters series on PBS) may not prize its subject that far out of his

shell but it's still an excellent primer on his work. Allen has made so many films that audiences can take him for granted. He is always being attacked by somebody, either for not sticking to being funny or for being too complacent or too pretentious. Arguably, it will only be when he has stopped making films and his work is looked at in its entirety that the full scope of his achievement will finally be appreciated.

◆◆ Geoffrey Macnab

CREDITS

Produced by
Robert B. Weide
Written by
Robert B. Weide
Camera
Buddy Squires
Bill Sheehy
Anthony Savini
Neve Cunningham
Nancy Schreiber
Edited by
Robert B. Weide
Karolina Tuovinen
Original Music
Paul Cantelon
Sound
J.E. Jack
Mark Roy
John Zecca
David Keene
John McNamara
Francis X. Coakley
Peter Miller
Michael Karas

©B Plus Productions, LLC
Production Companies
Whyaduck Productions, Rat Entertainment, Mike's Movies, Insurgent Media
In association with THIRTEEN's American Masters presents a film by Robert B. Weide
This program was produced by B Plus Productions
Executive Producers
Michael Peyser
Brett Ratner
Fisher Stevens
Andrew Karsch
Erik Gordon
Film Extracts
Alice (1990)
Annie Hall (1977)
Another Woman (1988)
Bananas (1971)

Broadway Danny Rose (1984)
Crimes and Misdemeanors (1989)
Hannah and Her Sisters (1986)
Interiors (1978)
Love and Death (1975)
Manhattan (1979)
A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy (1982)
The Purple Rose of Cairo (1985)
Radio Days (1987)
September (1987)
Shadows and Fog (1992)
Sleeper (1973)
Stardust Memories (1980)
What's New Pussycat (1965)
Zelig (1983)
Take the Money and Run (1969)
Play It Again, Sam (1972)
Husbands and Wives (1992)
Manhattan Murder Mystery (1993)
Bullets over Broadway (1994)
Mighty Aphrodite (1995)
Sweet and Lowdown (1999)
Match Point (2005)
Vicky Cristina Barcelona (2008)
You Will Meet a Tall Dark Stranger (2010)
Midnight in Paris (2011)

WITH

Letty Aronson
Marshall Brickman
Josh Brolin
Dick Cavett
Penélope Cruz
John Cusack

Larry David
F.X. Feeney
Robert Greenhut
Mariel Hemingway
Charles H. Joffe
Scarlett Johansson
Julie Kavner
Diane Keaton
Nettie Konigsberg
Martin Landau
Louise Lasser
Fr Robert Lauder
Erix Lax
Leonard Maltin
Doug McGrath
Sean Penn
Tony Roberts
Chris Rock
Jack Rollins
Richard Schickel
Martin Scorsese
Mira Sorvino
Stephen Tenenbaum
Naomi Watts
Fred Weintraub
Dianne Wiest
Gordon Willis
Owen Wilson

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[L85:1]

Distributor
Soda Pictures

Wrath of the Titans

USA/Spain 2012

Director: Jonathan Liebesman

Certificate 12A 99m 24s

With *Clash of the Titans* (2010), *Percy Jackson & the Lightning Thief* (2010) and *Immortals* (2011), the gods of Ancient Greece have been busy lately. It might have been first out of the gate (and Liam Neeson's Zeus undeniably has it in sheer presence over Sean Bean's or Luke Evans's), but Louis Leterrier's *Clash*, a remake of the 1981 film featuring the work of effects genius Ray Harryhausen, was one of those awkward mid-range box-office successes no one seemed happy with except the accountants who gave the greenlight to this sequel.

Given that *Clash* had Perseus skip from his traditional victory over Medusa to a battle with the Kraken, shamelessly poached from Norse mythology, it's no surprise that *Wrath of the Titans* simply summons whatever leftover monsters weren't crammed into the earlier movie. In rapid succession, Perseus takes on two-headed poison-spitting chimeras, cyclopes seemingly cloned from Jason Statham DNA, a split-faced minotaur who might be related to the mutant of Tobe Hooper's *The Funhouse* (1982), and the giant human-shaped volcano Kronos (the first actual Titan to appear in this series, though no one mentions it). Leterrier has been replaced by Jonathan Liebesman, whose CV is studded with forgettable like *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning* (2006) and *Battle Los Angeles* (2011), and the catastrophic conversion 3D of *Clash* has given way to a smoother process, but otherwise it's the same shtick, plodding from one monster attack to the next.

The screenplay takes the cast of the myths and shuffles them through a Greek equivalent of *Götterdämmerung*, which makes it feel like a knockoff of Tarsem Singh's frankly batty (if also wonderful) *Immortals* – to the extent of repeating the shot of hordes of battling gods raining from the skies as their era draws to a close. But it's not especially well thought through: the gods are fading from lack of prayer-power, yet Perseus never thinks to have Andromeda order her entire army to venerate the ailing king of Olympus to

fill him up again with the Zeus juice.

As Perseus, Sam Worthington – sporting a 'do that approximates Harry Hamlin in 1981 – is a hero not just edged out of his own story by his godly relatives (Neeson, Ralph Fiennes and Danny Huston would be an overwhelming triumvirate in anyone's belief system) but upstaged continually by fellow queesters. Besides panto-style British comedy mugging from Toby Kebbell as a trickster demigod and Bill Nighy as a Ben Gunn-like Hephaestus, Rosamund Pike plays Andromeda as principal boy in distracting contoured armour. It's terrible, of course, if fitfully entertaining – and all the thinner set beside the mythic muscle of the best Italian Hercules movies of the 1950s and 1960s, let alone Harryhausen's masterpiece *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963). ◆◆ Kim Newman

CREDITS

Produced by
Basil Iwanyk
Polly Johnsen
Screenplay
Dan Mazeau
David Leslie Johnson
Story
Greg Berlanti
David Leslie Johnson
Dan Mazeau
Based on characters created by Beverly Cross
Director of Photography
Ben Davis
Editor
Martin Walsh
Production Designer
Charles Wood
Music
Javier Navarrete
Supervising Sound Editor
Dominic Gibbs
Costume Designer
Jany Tempime
Visual Effects
Pixomondo
The Senate
Stunt Coordinator
Paul Jennings

©Cott Productions LLC
and Furia de Titanes II, A.I.E.
Production Companies
A Warner Bros. Pictures presentation in association with Legendary Pictures
A Cott Productions - Furia de Titanes II, A.I.E. co-production
A Thunder Road Film production
Executive Producers
Thomas Tull
Jon Jashni
Callum McDougall

Kevin De La Noy
Louis Leterrier

CAST

Sam Worthington
Perseus
Rosamund Pike
Queen Andromeda
Bill Nighy
Hephaestus
Edgar Ramirez
Ares
Sinéad Cusack
Clea
Tony Kebbell
Agenor
Danny Huston
Poseidon
Ralph Fiennes
Hades
Liam Neeson
Zeus

Dolby Digital/
Datasat/SDDS
Colour/Prints by
Technicolor
[L85:1]
[L43:1] - IMAX prints

Some screenings
presented in 3D

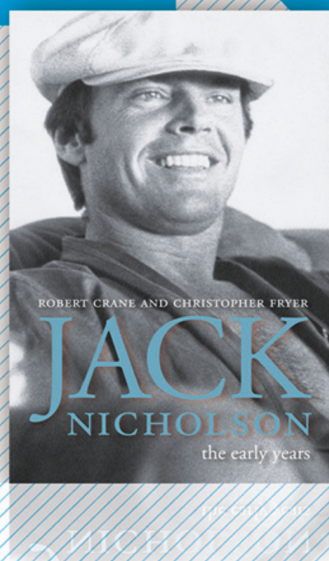
Distributor
Warner Bros
Distributors (UK)

8,946 ft +0 frames

IMAX prints
144,575 ft
100m 24s

SYNOPSIS In ancient times, the gods of Olympus lose their powers as humanity ceases to pray to them. Zeus visits his half-human son Perseus and solicits his aid in coping with a crisis caused by the passing of the gods, but the widowed hero wants only to live quietly as a fisherman with his young son Helius. Zeus and Perseus's half-brother Ares visit Zeus's brother Hades in Tartarus, the realm of the dead, where Kronos, the monstrous father of Zeus and Hades, is imprisoned. Ares and Hades strike down Zeus and drain his power into Kronos, intent on unleashing him. As chimeras ravage the land, Perseus is warned by a dying Poseidon – the third of Kronos's sons – that this could be the end of humanity. Allied with warrior queen Andromeda and Poseidon's trickster son Agenor, Perseus seeks out Hephaestus, armourer of the gods, who can smuggle them into Tartarus. After skirmishing with cyclopes on Hephaestus's island, the group make their way into the Underworld. Perseus rescues his father, who persuades Hades to side with him again, and clashes with Ares before assembling a mystic weapon that enables him to defeat Kronos in battle. Zeus and Ares die, but Perseus lives on.

Read

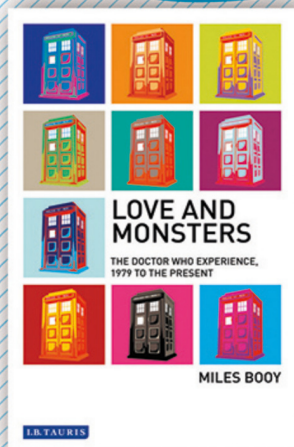


Jack Nicholson: The Early Years

By Robert Crane and Christopher Fryer, Screen Classics, 216pp, paperback, illustrated, £17.50, ISBN 9780813136158

Originally published as *Jack Nicholson: Face to Face* in 1975, *Jack Nicholson: The Early Years* was the first book written about the enigmatic star and the only one to have Nicholson's participation. In 1975 Nicholson was just becoming a household name in spite of already having starred in, written or produced 25 films, including classics such as *Easy Rider* (1969), *Five Easy Pieces* (1970), *The Last Detail* (1973) and *Chinatown* (1974). To date, Nicholson has been nominated for 12 Academy Awards and won three, has garnered seven Golden Globe awards, and took home the American Film Institute's Life Achievement Award at the age of 57.

www.eurospanbookstore.com

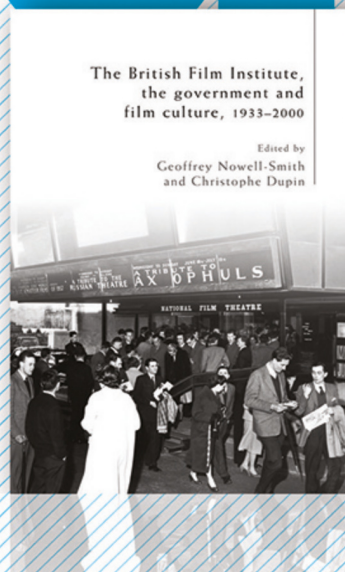


Love and Monsters: The Doctor Who Experience, 1979 to the Present

By Miles Booy, I.B. Tauris, 240pp, paperback, £14.99, ISBN 9781848854796

Scholar and *Who* fan Miles Booy has written the first historical account of the public interpretation of *Doctor Who*. *Love and Monsters* begins in 1979 with the publication of *Doctor Who Weekly*, the magazine that would start a chain of events that would see creative fans taking control of the merchandise and even of the programme's massively successful 21st-century reboot. From the twilight of Tom Baker's years to the newest Doctor, Matt Smith, Booy explores the shifting meaning of *Doctor Who* across the years. This is also the story of how producer John Nathan-Turner, assigned to the programme in 1979, produced a visually excessive programme for a tele-literate fanbase.

www.ibtauris.com

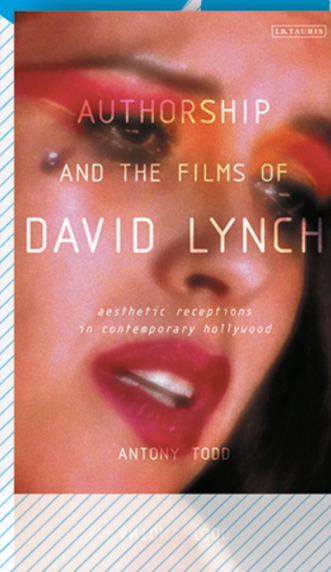


The British Film Institute, the Government and Film Culture, 1933-2000

By Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Christophe Dupin, Manchester University Press, 348pp, hardback, illustrated, £65, ISBN 9780719079085

Based on intensive original research in the BFI's own voluminous archives and elsewhere, this book examines the interplay of external and internal forces that led to the BFI's unique development as a multifaceted public body. The book is wide-ranging in scope, covering not only the BFI, but 75 years of British cultural life, including film societies, the film-archive movement and the Museum of the Moving Image. Its publication is extremely timely, as the shake-up in arts funding and the merging of the UK Film Council into the BFI have put the spotlight on the historic and contemporary role of support for the arts. This volume will be a treasure trove for anyone interested in film and the workings of cultural institutions, or more generally in 20th-century British film history.

www.manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk



Authorship and the Films of David Lynch: Aesthetic Receptions in Contemporary Hollywood

By Antony Todd, I.B. Tauris, 224pp, paperback, £16.99, ISBN 9781848855809

Tracing the development of Lynch's career from cult obscurity with *Eraserhead*, to star auteur through the release of *Blue Velvet* and TV phenomenon *Twin Peaks*, Antony Todd examines how the director's idiosyncratic style introduced the term 'Lynchian' to the colloquial speech of new Hollywood and helped establish Lynch as the leading light among contemporary American auteurs. Todd explores contemporary manners and attitudes for artistic reputation-building, and the standards by which Lynch's reputation was dismantled following the release of *Wild at Heart* and *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*, only to be reassembled once more through films such as *Lost Highway*, *Mulholland Dr.* and *Inland Empire*.

www.ibtauris.com

Law of the jungle

The 1932 film of H.G. Wells's *Dr Moreau* story is disturbing and subtextually explosive, writes **Michael Atkinson**

The Island of Lost Souls

Erle C. Kenton; US 1932; Masters of Cinema/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD; 71 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1; Features: video interviews with Charles Laughton biographer Simon Callow and with film historian Jonathan Rigby, booklet with new essay by Kim Newman

Arguably the most disquieting and subtextually explosive of the 1930s Hollywood gout of horror adaptations, this misty hothouse Paramount classic acutely evokes the battery of qualmy ideas in H.G. Wells's 1896 novel 'The Island of Dr Moreau': filthy secret jungle lairs, megalomaniac vivisectionism prophesying the ugliest Nazi experiments while mocking the new 19th-to-20th-century leaps in evolutionary biology and physiology, the disturbing dread of radical miscegenation obliterating our safe beliefs in the separation of human and animal. Erle C. Kenton's film dives into this swamp head first, and no bigger compliment can be made to it than to say that the thematic ickiness of the film is intensified by its early-talkie mood and aura. (If the film had been made five years later, with the accompanying degree of polish, it would lose a good deal of its found-under-a-rock creepiness.) A year before Robert Armstrong made it to the humid primeval chaos of Skull Island in 'King Kong', we visit upon Dr Moreau (Charles Laughton) and his sweaty, overgrown enclave, peopled entirely by furry, bestial humanoids created in the lab out of imported animals, whose tribal community in the darkness eventually decides, after transgressions wrought by the doctor following the happenstantial presence of castaway Richard Arlen, that they've had enough of the good doctor's House of Pain.

We know the story, juiced up here with the hero's romance with a sultry and semi-feral Panther Woman (wherein a single kiss's moment of arousal – with an animal – turns the man's world upside-down), but the movie bristles with chilling moments and set pieces, from Laughton's whip-cracking discipline over the zoological aberrations ("What is the Law?") who pathetically respond in an all-too-convincing primal chant ("Are we not men?"), to the climactic turnabout of betrayal and scalpels, with Laughton screaming like no human had ever screamed on film before. Certainly, the fur-covered backs and briefly glimpsed mutations of 'the natives' remain profoundly unsettling. Watching the film, you have the distinctive sense of visiting a genuine social phobia, an exercising of centuries of human exceptionalism



Beastly: Charles Laughton in 'The Island of Lost Souls'

It was wicked enough in its day to warrant an outright ban from British censors

growing nauseated and sick by the reality of Darwinism and the rise of secular science, which privileges no meat puppet over any other. But in its careful depiction of the manimals' own self-regard – they've been led to believe they're the inheritors of a new evolutionary mantle, and when the lie is exposed the insurrection ignites – the film steps into sociopolitical waters that were just getting murky in Germany.

Well might we wonder where this slouching beast of a film came from, wicked enough in its day to warrant an outright ban from British censors. (It was banned as well in more than half a dozen other territories.) Its provenance is difficult to nail down: Kenton was an undistinguished journeyman despite some 'Cahiers du cinéma' attention in auteurism's nascent heyday. (His best-known credits are divided between latter-stage entries in the Universal Frankenstein cycle and Abbott and Costello comedies.) No producer takes credit, perhaps due in some fashion to Paramount being on the brink of bankruptcy at the time, but the cinematographer was Karl Struss ('Sunrise') and screenwriters Philip Wylie (later to write 'When Worlds Collide') and Waldemar Young (a nimble jack-of-all-genres and Tod Browning vet) were certainly awake to the queasy implications of Wells's story. Indeed, the groundwork for such

a conscientiously upsetting piece of work may have been set in Hollywood by the legacy of Browning, Lon Chaney and Young. (One should note that at least one of the multitude of Moreau's uncredited Beast Men, Schlitz, as well as leading lady Leila Hyams, appeared that same year in Browning's 'Freaks'). It's an overlooked and perverse secret detour running through the homogenised beginnings of Hollywood's Golden Era – call it post-WWI body horror, running from Browning and Chaney's 'The Unknown' (1927) to 1935's mutilative 'The Raven', after which its horrified impulses seemed to have been scrubbed from the growing industry's docket.

Whoever the auteur, this remains by far the best Moreau film (and maybe the best Wells adaptation ever), capturing vividly the sense of the book's ominous denouement, in which Wells's protagonist, years later, tries to forget what he saw. But, occasionally, he says, "I look about me at my fellow man. And I go in fear."

Long a musty old broadcast leftover, the film has been given the pristine restoration treatment, and not a moment too soon. The plethora of extras and interviews are great fun (among them an interview with Charles Laughton biographer Simon Callow, and a new essay on the film by Kim Newman). The Region 1 Criterion DVD/Blu-ray, released late last year in the same restoration as the Masters of Cinema disc, also boasted interviews with the founding members of Devo (consulted merely because of the band's use of the "Are we not men?" catchphrase) waxing rhapsodic about the significance of the old film for alienated Ohio undergrads in the Nixon era.

La Bataille du rail

René Clément; France 1946; INA Editions/Region B Blu-Ray; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; 83 minutes; Features: original trailer, analysis by historian Sylvie Lindeperg, Henri Alekan interview, Clément short 'Ceux du rail' (1943), newsreel of funeral of Resistance railwayman (1945), TV programme 'Les Dossiers de l'écran' (1969)

Film: *La Bataille du rail* was released to huge acclaim in France in 1946, and the same year won the Grand Prix at Cannes, with René Clément feted as best director. Given the proximity of the events depicted, it's perhaps not surprising that an essentially heroic view of how the Resistance destabilised the railway system – central to the efficacy of the occupying German forces – would be so highly regarded.

Following the Liberation, the society representing the interests of the French Resistance and the French national railways (the SNCF) agreed on the need for a film depicting their struggle during the Occupation. Henri Alekan, the extraordinary cinematographer later responsible for Cocteau's *Beauty and the Beast* and Wenders's *Wings of Desire*, and a former Resistance member himself, proposed Clément as director, having previously worked with him on a brilliant short documentary about the life of railwaymen, *Ceux du rail* (included as an extra on this Blu-ray edition). Together they began shooting a short film, but everyone was so impressed by their efforts that the idea was expanded into a feature. Like Roberto Rossellini's *Rome Open City* (1945), the result transcended the usual barriers between reality and fiction; Clément shot entirely on location, avoided obvious special effects (a famous scene showing the blowing up of an entire train transporting German tanks is clearly unfaked) and mixed professional actors and real railwaymen so that it is hard to say who is who. But the film never approaches the emotional engagement of Rossellini's depiction of the war, placing as it does history above the personal.

Clément begins by outlining the place of the railway system in a country divided between a 'free' zone and occupied territory, building from the use of trains to smuggle documents and arms to the regular sabotage carried out by workers to create disorganisation and confound the Germans. Clément even employs an impersonal voiceover to set this up, then focuses on two individuals who manage the process, before showing the role played by the *maquis* in a highly dramatic and eventually disastrous attack on a train transporting the German military. But if the film remains startlingly potent in its realism, it also reveals Clément to be a master of suspense. In probably the film's most celebrated sequence, a group of railwaymen are lined up against a wall and executed by firing squad. In a gripping montage of image and sound, the hissing and groaning of steam locomotives provides an extraordinary emotional counterpoint to the men's

tragic fate. Alekan's images throughout are both indelibly beautiful and brutal.

Today, questions hang over the film's depiction of such consistent heroism among the railway workers, whose main mission is evidently to impede the movement of German arms following the landings of the Allies. The only reference to the Holocaust, which of course involved many appalling rail journeys, is a notice seen at the beginning of the film forbidding Jews to enter the occupied zone. But *La Bataille du rail* remains compelling for its extraordinary demonstration of bravery in the face of real fears, and for its undeniable cinematic brilliance.

Disc: A fine restoration, even if some damage to the original elements can't be disguised. Excellent English subtitles are provided for the feature but not for the fascinating extras. (DT)

Black Pond

Will Sharpe and Tom Kingsley; UK 2011; Black Pond Films/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 15; 83 minutes; Aspect Ratio 16:9 anamorphic; Features: deleted scenes, short film 'Cockroach'

Film: This melancholy, bleakly funny black comedy, about a bickering family plunged into notoriety by an act of kindness, has a dexterity and formal sophistication that belie its micro-budget (£25,000) and its status as a debut film. It's an intensely English piece, dotted with awkward silences and with a self-consciously choppy narrative that makes excellent use of Chris Langham's peerless comic diffidence as a bumbling Good Samaritan in a fraying marriage. Less sure-handed is a tediously deadpan strand involving Simon Amstell's troublemaking therapist and a certain static, Wes Anderson-style quirkiness around the family's twentysomething characters (Anderson, like Instagram, is turning into the default filter for young creatives). But Colin Hurley's walking-wounded house-guest undercuts the domestic comedy in truly unsettling fashion, aided by the film's scattering of pensive landscape interludes and surreal, spidery animations.

Disc: A fine transfer, which copes well with the film's rapid shifts in style and subtle soundtrack. *Cockroach*, a slow-burn short by *Black Pond*'s directors Will Sharpe and Tom Kingsley, is a nifty addition – but an audio commentary revealing how they made a film this good for less than the price of a family saloon would have been even better. (XS)



Film noir: Chris Langham in 'Black Pond'



Faces Through just eight key scenes, and in lacerating detail, Cassavetes lays bare the behavioural rituals underpinning human relationships

The John Cassavetes Collection

Shadows

US 1959; BFI/Region-free Blu-ray and DVD Dual Format; Certificate PG; 82/79 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1; Features: commentary with Seymour Cassel and Tom Charity, Peter Falk interview, John Cassavetes/Burton Lane acting workshop footage, original trailer, booklet

Faces

US 1968; BFI/Region-free Blu-ray and DVD Dual Format; Certificate 15; 130/125 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.66:1 (DVD anamorphic); Features: alternative opening sequence (with optional commentary by Peter Bogdanovich and Al Ruban), Seymour Cassel interview, booklet

Films: Although one might have expected that half a century's worth of low-to-zero-budget independent filmmaking would have doused their original fire, John Cassavetes's first self-financed independent productions (bookending studio films *Too Late Blues* and *A Child Is Waiting*) remain startlingly confrontational. If his debut *Shadows* wasn't anything like as improvised as its famous end title would have us believe, it nonetheless feels authentically caught on the wing, the technical flubs heightening the effect of absolute naturalism. The central narrative, in which two brothers and a sister of varying skin hues negotiate a largely white world in their own particular ways, becomes a springboard for an often enthrallingly detailed portrait of young urban New Yorkers from a social milieu that had rarely been depicted with such sympathy and understanding.

If *Shadows* remains permanently imbued with what *S&S*'s Michael Atkinson calls "its essential 1959-ness" in one of the booklet essays, *Faces* is remarkably timeless: only the hairstyles confirm that it was shot in 1965. Through just eight key scenes, and in lacerating detail, Cassavetes lays bare

the behavioural rituals underpinning human relationships, whether married, transactional (via Gena Rowlands's prostitute Jeannie) or frankly mismatched (Seymour Cassel's neo-hippie optimistically pawed by women old enough to be his mother). The high-contrast black-and-white 16mm cinematography accentuates the abiding impression of an anthropological documentary study. **Discs:** Released separately as the first two instalments of the BFI's dual-format *John Cassavetes Collection* (*A Woman Under the Influence*, *The Killing of a Chinese Bookie* and *Opening Night* are forthcoming), the transfers are sourced from the recent UCLA restorations. Thankfully, no attempt has been made to smooth over copious grain except as a byproduct of the lower-resolution DVD transfer: the Blu-rays look splendidly tactile. Optional subtitles provide a welcome navigational aid through the rough-and-ready soundtracks. Many of the extras, such as the alternative opening to *Faces* and the silent footage of the Cassavetes/Burton Lane acting workshops that spawned *Shadows*, also featured on earlier Cassavetes releases. However, the Peter Falk interview (shot by Paul Joyce in 1993) is exclusive to the BFI release, as are the wide-ranging booklets with essays by Tom Charity, Mike Atkinson, David Austen, Jan Dawson, Brian Morton, Al Ruban, Robert Vas and Cassavetes himself. The only significant omission is the original 1957 cut of *Shadows*, still extant but currently in legal limbo. (MB)

Un condamné à mort s'est échappé (A Man Escaped)

Robert Bresson; France 1956; Gaumont/Region B Blu-ray; 101 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: trailer, 'L'Essence des formes', documentary by Pierre-Henri Gibert

Film: François Truffaut described Robert Bresson's film depicting the true story of

the escape of a member of the French Resistance from Lyons prison in 1943 as "pure music". It stands as one of Bresson's most concentrated and yet most approachable films, and was in fact his greatest commercial success. Mainly this stems from the perfect marriage of subject with this most religiously austere of filmmakers: imprisonment functions as much as a metaphor for the state of the human soul as it does for a condition of the Occupation. The lack of 'acting', which Bresson sought to eradicate from his amateur 'models' for fear of making filmed theatre, is also entirely appropriate to the withdrawn intensity of the incarcerated *résistants*.

Bresson's preferred title for the film, 'Le vent souffle où il veut' ('The Wind Bloweth Where it Listeth'), a quotation from St John's Gospel which appears after the main title, and the presence of religious characters and references throughout underline his reading of these events as a journey of spiritual awakening for his protagonist Fontaine. Mozart's Mass in C Minor accompanies the prisoners as they pour out their daily slop, creating a mysterious counterpoint between the sublime nature of the music and the base activity demanded of the men. For much of the film it is heard as just an orchestral fragment, only fully returning with chorus at the affirmative conclusion. Although apparently all pretence at suspense is deflated by the title alone (it was released in the UK as *A Man Escaped*), not to mention the retrospective narration, in fact there are many instances of dramatic tension throughout, as the situation focuses on the 'how' of the escape rather than its outcome.

In this respect Bresson displays his complete command of sound and image, with the former often taking precedence: the clattering of keys on railings, the barking sounds of the Germans issuing orders, the closing of locks and the shots of firing squads, the whistling and screeching of the trams and the railway line outside the prison walls – all these become as significant and disturbing as any element of the film. We learn from Pierre Lhomme in the accompanying documentary of this edition that Bresson would rework his soundtracks entirely after filming, and that he could read his dialogue better than any of his actors. The interiors of the prison were in fact almost entirely filmed in the studio, giving the lie to any idea that we should regard the result as a documentary reconstruction. Yet in this film Bresson's total control of his material never feels artificial or airless, rather an absolute vindication of his bringing cinema closer to painting and music.

Disc: A stunning high-definition transfer, perfectly rendering the cinematographer Léonce-Henry Burel's characteristic use of subtle shades of grey. The soundtrack has also been made exceptionally vivid without evident distortion of the filmmaker's intentions. The excellent subtitles are

NEW RELEASES

← unfortunately not provided for the accompanying documentary, which includes only one participant from the film – lead actor (and later director) François Leterrier – but delivers interesting observations on Bresson's methods from later collaborators and the self-regarding Bruno Dumont. (DT)

Conversation Piece

Luchino Visconti; Italy 1974; RaroVideo/Region B Blu-ray; 122 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1; Features: interview with Alessandro Bencivenni, illustrated booklet

Film: "Old people are strange animals... Cross, intolerant, with sudden fears of the solitude they've made for themselves, which they then defend as soon as they see it threatened." This is Burt Lancaster, outlining the delicate boundaries of his performance in chamber drama *Conversation Piece*, Count Luchino Visconti's penultimate film. As *Conversation Piece's* Professor (no further name given), Lancaster displays much of the same leonine poise and marble-bust chill of his Prince in Visconti's *The Leopard* (1963), playing another sort of anachronism, an American of Italian ancestry who has immured himself from the modern world in his Roman palazzo, between walls cluttered with 18th-century British group portraits, the title's 'conversation pieces'. (The superb

production design is courtesy of Mario Garbuglia.) While the Professor is quietly adding to his collection, his fortress of solitude is invaded by Silvana Mangano's pushy marchesa, who browbeats him into renting her his top floor, to be used as a gilded cage for her boy-toy Konrad (Helmut Berger, Visconti's lover and muse), a 1968 activist turned gigolo-to-the-gentry. Konrad becomes a kind of surrogate son for the old man in the contentious course of an intellectual odd-couple set-up which inverts the usual crass American/cultured Continental dynamic, with the Professor's bedtime Mozart interrupted by Konrad's Italo-pop, destructive renovations to turn the upstairs into a plastic postmodern bachelor pad, and nude pot parties. The recurring themes of Visconti's career (wilful sadomasochistic entrapment, the obscure links between emotional and political commitment), which had previously been on the battlefields of Europe, are here replayed within a few chambers, with a resonance that is all the more booming for the confinement.

Disc: Raro's transfer does justice to the cinematography by Pasqualino De Santis – subtly modulated when slipping into lovely flashback sequences. An interview with critic Alessandro Bencivenni and liner notes



BO STILLS, POSTERS AND DESIGNS (C)

Gruel intentions: 'The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby'

by filmmaker Mark Rappaport help to situate *Conversation Piece* – the deliberately scaled-in first film that Visconti completed after a stroke following 1972's *Ludwig* – within the director's career and personal life. (NP)

Demons/Demons 2

Lamberto Bava; Italy 1985/86; Arrow Video/Region B Blu-ray; Certificate 18; 183 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.66:1; Features: essays by Calum Wadell, audio recollections of Lamberto Bava, Sergio Stivaletti, Loris Curci, Geretta Geretta and Claudio Simonetti, 'Dario's Demon Days', 'Defining an Era in Music' (composer Claudio Simonetti on the soundtrack), 'Luigi Cozzi's Top Italian Terrors'

Films: If any franchise sums up what became of Euro-horror in the 1980s it's the *Demons* series. In 1985, producer Dario Argento and director Lamberto Bava had solid track records but needed a hit. *Demons* was it, establishing a franchise that ran to an official sequel (Bava's *Demons 2*) and at least three rival stabs at a third film. *Demons* is the sort of picture that takes at least four people (none of whose first language is the one the film is shot in, English) to write: it isn't so much scripted as assembled, with scenes or ideas from different participants loosely strung together on a central premise (extra points for doing a mini-adaptation of Nabokov's *Invitation to a Beheading* as a subplot).

The films have many of the problems of 1980s cinema: everyone wears a puffy jacket and has puffer hair, characters such as the coke-snorting punks or the black pimp and his girlfriends come from a middle-aged imagination rather than the streets of Berlin, and two albums' worth of sampled metal hits just seem like random noise on the soundtrack getting in the way of Simon Boswell's imaginative proper score. Riffing on North American models like *Shivers*, *The Evil Dead* and *Gremlins*, the movies centre on a haunted film (about robbing Nostradamus's tomb) that spreads evil into reality, triggering outbreaks of possession in a cinema

(where the movie is previewed) or in a high-rise apartment block (where it plays on television).

Chaotic, inconsistent, blithely indifferent to storytelling and as prone to cack-handed unintentional comedy as to grossout horror, these are guilty pleasures, but in their demented glee glints a workable idea about the dead end of this kind of horror filmmaking. **Discs:** Given the challenges posed by 1980s outfits, hairstyles, effects techniques and lighting choices, these Blu-ray transfers make the films look about as good as possible – the occasional fluttery shot in *Demons 2* is down to an equipment fault the original filmmakers didn't fix, and so the glitches represent how the movie has always been. English and Italian audio tracks are offered but both have that hollow, haunted post-synch sound common in Italian cinema. The extras include interviews and commentaries featuring Bava, Argento, expert Luigi Cozzi, effects man Sergio Stivaletti and composer Claudio Simonetti. In lieu of several films that could claim the title *Demons 3* – Michele Soavi's *The Church* and Bava's *The Ogre* – a comic-book extends the mythology of the film and turns this into a trilogy. (KN)

Dickens on Film**The Old Curiosity Shop**

Thomas Bentley; UK 1934; StudioCanal/Region 2 DVD; Certificate U; 92 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1; Features: interviews, short film ('Dickens' London'), stills gallery
The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby
Alberto Cavalcanti; UK 1947; StudioCanal/Region 2 DVD; Certificate U; 103 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1; Features: interviews, short film ('Nicholas Nickleby'), trailer, stills gallery

Films: StudioCanal's contribution to the Charles Dickens bicentenary consists of two separately released DVDs. Thomas Bentley's *The Old Curiosity Shop* is the lesser-known curio, an ambitious condensation of Dickens's sprawling novel into just over 90 minutes that

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would be easy to dismiss as a creaky melodrama if it didn't showcase one of the most memorably grotesque of all filmed Dickens performances. When he's not bounding about like a baboon, wrestling with a hammock or drumming fingers on the windowsill as though mentally tackling a particularly frenzied Liszt concerto, Hay Petrie's hirsute hunchback Quilp is urging a child to "smoke away, you dog!" while devising ways of making the lives of Little Nell and her grandfather particularly unpleasant. Seemingly well aware of how much energy Petrie injected into the film, Bentley wraps up proceedings quickly after Quilp has met his maker. Surprisingly, Nell's demise is less mawkish than usual, the unavoidable lamentations offset by a solemn Chopin prelude.

Bookended and understandably overshadowed by David Lean's *Great Expectations* and *Oliver Twist*, Alberto Cavalcanti's take on Dickens nonetheless has a fair bit going for it, cramming a surprising amount of a complicated and episodic novel into less than two hours. The crepuscular opening scenes at Dotheboys Hall see the film at its strongest, since Derek Bond's Nicholas later turns out to be a bit of a wet blanket. But the supporting cast offers plenty of star-spotting opportunities, including Sybil Thorndike's grotesque Mrs Speers, Stanley Holloway's genial Vincent Crummies, Bernard Miles's quietly scheming Newman Noggs, and one of Jill Balcon's few screen appearances as Madeline Bray – but Cedric Hardwicke's moneylender Ralph Nickleby anchors the film. The *Monthly Film Bulletin* claimed that he was "too gentlemanly" – not a complaint likely to be echoed by today's viewers, more than comfortable with the notion of outwardly respectable bankers proving to be quintessentially villainous.

Discs: The unrestored source prints are in decent nick (though the near-octogenarian *Old Curiosity Shop* shows noticeably more wear) and each film has optional subtitles. On each disc, quality-over-quantity extras include well-researched discussions of both film and novel (courtesy of a Michael Eaton/Adrian Wootton double-act and a solo by Dickens biographer Michael Slater), plus a rare silent short. *The Old Curiosity Shop* gets the lively costume travelogue *Dickens' London* (1924), with the dwarf Quilp cheekily asking for a half bus fare, while *Nicholas Nickleby* gets George O. Nichols's 1912 adaptation, an efficient 20-minute précis. (MB)

Hit!

Sidney J. Furie; US 1973; Olive Films/Region 1 NTSC DVD; 134 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1

Film: This rarely regarded early-1970s crime epic begins all blax and jivey, with a black high-school student dying of a heroin OD and her fed-agent father (Billy Dee Williams) deciding, much to his superiors' chagrin, to eliminate the drug trade at the source. This being

Affairs of the heart



Mind the age gap: Mimi Branesco and Maria Popistasu in 'Tuesday, After Christmas'

Radu Muntean is one of the most scalpel-precise analysts of contemporary relationships, argues Michael Brooke

Tuesday, After Christmas

Radu Muntean; Romania 2010; Second Run/Region O DVD; Certificate 15; 96 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1 anamorphic; Features: interviews, booklet

Despite being denied a British theatrical release (though it was the first of his films to open in US cinemas), Radu Muntean's fourth feature turned up on quite a few best-of-2010/11 lists, and it's not hard to see why. That said, if summed up in a ten-word pitch, its central situation ("Family life over the few days surrounding an adultery confession") sounds not so much unpromising as excessively familiar. Surely a random week's viewing of 'EastEnders' would turn up an almost identical scenario?

But on the evidence of 'Tuesday, After Christmas' and its immediate predecessor 'Boogie' (2008), Muntean is fast becoming one of the most scalpel-precise contemporary analysts of the motivations and psychology underlying the traditional seven-year itch. The title character in 'Boogie' (real name Bogdan), notionally holidaying at the seaside with his family, spends a raucous night out with two old friends instead, during which they pick up a prostitute in an attempt to relive their dissolute twenties. However, Boogie stops short of triggering an actual family rupture, which is harder to avoid in the case of the later film's protagonist Paul Hanganu (Mimi Branesco), who – despite being married to Adriana (Mirela Oprisor), the father of young Mara and visibly middle-aged (greying hair, a paunch) – has been pursuing a five-month affair with blonde

26-year-old dental technician Raluca (Maria Popistasu).

The actors Branesco and Oprisor are married in real life, which lends both their onscreen chemistry and Paul's full-frontally naked encounters with Raluca a considerable extra frisson. This is further augmented by Muntean and his cinematographer Tudor Lucaciu refining the approach that they used in 'Boogie', whereby the more incidental scenes are shot and cut conventionally but the most emotionally affecting material is filmed in lengthy single takes, this time in anamorphic widescreen to give the characters more space to move around in, and indeed to lie down in. The unbroken seven-minute opening sees Paul and Raluca making small talk while still enjoying a post-coital glow (it's not made clear that she's his mistress until part-way through), and the already agonising five minutes during which Paul casually confesses his infidelity to Adriana is immediately followed by 11 minutes of her instinctively negotiating Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's stages of grief in uncomfortably real time. The performances in this scene in particular are beyond praise: there's not a moment that rings anything other than painfully true, and Muntean has confirmed that many of the most affecting moments were devised by the actors during extensive rehearsal.

Clearly more interested in character than storytelling (following his convolutedly Guy Ritchie-esque debut 'The Rage' in 2002, his narratives have

been getting noticeably simpler with each successive film), Muntean spells out comparatively few concrete details and gives us little backstory, trusting the attentive viewer to fill in the gaps. After the lengthy opening, Paul and Raluca get only two more scenes together on their own (the third is an unplanned encounter between Paul, Raluca and Adriana, the latter still in the dark about their relationship), and we're told little about what brought them together, what they have in common, or whether they have a viable future given a roughly 15-year age gap and clearly divergent interests. Paul expresses misgivings about whether his friend Cristi's new girlfriend Narcisa will last more than a month or two, but there are few signs that his own five-month dalliance with Raluca is any more secure. Certainly, her mother has definite views on the matter, even if they're only expressed to Paul with a warning-shot: "We see these things differently, if you don't mind me saying so." Whereas Muntean's earlier films all made explicit reference to Romania's recent past, there's nothing here that couldn't be transposed to almost any country with a consumer-oriented professional middle class, although it's unlikely that a Hollywood remake would be quite so unflinchingly forensic.

There's little to say about Second Run's typically conscientious presentation: as one would expect from a director-approved transfer of a very recent film, picture and sound are about as good as DVD gets, and the subtitles are optional. Extras comprise two substantial interviews with Muntean, one on video (by Mihai Chirilov), the other in the booklet (by Damon Smith, who also contributes a short introduction to the film).

■ 'Tuesday, After Christmas' screens on 9 May – followed by a Q&A with Muntean – at the Riverside Cinema, Hammersmith

Muntean spells out few concrete details and gives us little backstory, trusting the attentive viewer to fill in the gaps

Turn on, toon in

In the 1950s, UPA took the cartoon form to new artistic heights. Tim Lucas reflects on a golden era for US animation

UPA: The Jolly Frolics Collection

US 1948-58; Sony/Turner Classic Movies/Region 1 DVD; various aspect ratios; Features: introduction by Leonard Maltin, commentary by Maltin and animation expert Jerry Beck, concept art, model sheets, storyboards, backgrounds, cel set-ups, pencil tests, stills, posters

This remarkable three-disc set collects a decade's worth of short-form animation, all produced by Stephen Bosustow for Columbia, whose graphic sophistication often begs for a loftier term than 'cartoon'. In these 38 shorts, several of which were adapted from literary or musical sources, UPA (United Productions of America) advanced the artform, producing innovative, design-conscious, truly adventurous work that visibly influenced the acknowledged masters at all the major studios, including Disney. Though perfectly child-friendly, UPA's cartoons were aimed at more mature sensibilities, and it's this distinction that has prevented them from being more widely seen since they went out of theatrical circulation. Nevertheless, during those years when they were in production, no cartoon factory was accorded more critical respect or press attention, or won more awards and nominations, than UPA. This set includes everything except the studio's work for TV ('Dick Tracy', available separately) and features ('Gay Purr-ee'), and the complete run of its successful 'Mr Magoo' cartoons, which is imminently due for separate release. The first Magoo cartoon, 'The Ragtime Bear', is included for reference, however.

The UPA shorts were an outgrowth of Columbia's own cartoon factory and began with a continuation of its popular Fox and Crow characters, whose influence on the work of Warners Bros's animation director Chuck Jones is immediately obvious. Rather than simply recasting these beloved stars in another story as themselves, director John Hubley had the insight to use them as 'actors' in a classic adaptation ('Robin Hoodlum', 1948); Jones followed suit with his classics 'The Scarlet Pumpernickel' (1950) and 'Robin Hood Daffy' (1958). The next Fox-and-Crow item, 'The Magic Fluke' (1949), was remade without acknowledgement by Tex Avery at MGM as one of his masterpieces, 'Magical Maestro'; in 1952, Avery trumped every gag but couldn't improve on the iconoclastic (yet Academy Award-nominated) sense of design exhibited by UPA's Jules Engel and William T. Hurtz – alumni of Disney's 'Pinocchio' and 'Fantasia' who were hellbent, with Hubley,



Hats off: 'Rooty Toot Toot' (1951), one of the films included in 'UPA: The Jolly Frolics Collection'

on bringing contemporary graphic design innovations into the medium. The creative freedom they afforded attracted the very best talent not under contract: Art Babbitt, Grim Natwick, T. Hee and Bill Scott, voice artists such as Hans Conried, Jim Backus and Harold Peary ('The Great Gildersleeve'), not to mention an unusual range of composers including David Raksin ('Laura'), Billy May ('The Green Hornet') and future Hanna-Barbera tunesmith Hoyt Curtin. The quality of their efforts won them the right to adapt the work of Dr Seuss ('Gerald McBoing-Boing') and James Thurber ('The Unicorn in the Garden'). Under the predominant directorial supervision of Hubley and Robert Cannon, the influences never

stop: in 'The Miner's Daughter', we have a prototype of Dudley Do-Right singing the song Huckleberry Hound later made his own ('Oh My Darling Clementine'); in 'Giddyap' we hear a character exclaim "What the heck!" more than a decade before Cecil the Sea-Sick Sea Serpent; in the character design of 'Gerald McBoing-Boing', with his red tent shirt and curled forelocks, we can see the design of Alvin, the proto-punk leader of the Chipmunks.

Though UPA was under pressure from Columbia to create and accentuate characters, umbrella banners such as Pete Hothood, Christopher Crumpet and The Family Circus were not the studio's strongest suit. The eye is far more likely to be attracted to the screaming genius of the backgrounds, the province of the most assertive creative imagination contained in this set: designer Paul Julian. A Warner Bros 'Looney Tunes' alumnus (whose office shorthand for 'Get out of my way!' inspired the Road Runner's 'Beep! Beep!'), Julian's earliest work here builds on an idea initiated by Gene Fleury in Chuck Jones's 1943 cartoon 'Wackiki Wabbit': wallpaper patterns cut

into backgrounds. After going as far as they could go with their signature house style in Hubley's eye-popping masterpiece 'Rooty Toot Toot' (1951), Julian's designs set their sights on deconstruction, gradually eliminating the lines defining wall and floor space until the whole job is remarkably left to single colour backdrops in Cannon's 'How Now Boing Boing' (1954). (In the only UPA short directed by Julian, 1955's 'Baby Boogie', character itself is reduced to childlike scribbles.)

But Julian's tour de force is the same as that of this entire set: Ted Parmelee's 'The Tell-Tale Heart' (1954). Nominated for an Academy Award and the first film short to receive an X rating from the British Board of Film Censors, the Poe adaptation arrives midway through the set like a lightning bolt. Narrated by James Mason, it is not only grim in tone and clearly adult, but (as the commentators note) it contains probably the least amount of animation in any animated short, being told almost entirely in static Dalí-esque images, the animation coming from zooms in or out, dissolves, transitions and lighting effects. Julian's dominant hand in the production will be apparent to anyone familiar with his title sequences for such Roger Corman productions as 'Dementia 13' and 'The Terror'; indeed, this short single-handedly charts the entire visual landscape later proposed by Corman's Poe films. The last four shorts, featuring Hattie and Ham, are little musical mini-double features, less impressive for their design than for their uncharacteristic warmth and whimsy.

Sony's restoration of these shorts is breathtaking, which makes it slightly annoying that several of them, evidently gauged 1.66:1, have been zoomboxed at 1.78:1, making the compositions look needlessly tight. The only UPA cartoon filmed in anamorphic scope, 'Gerald McBoing-Boing on Planet Moo' (1956) is shown in its full 2.35:1 ratio and most are in 1.33:1. The audio commentaries are spirited, appreciative and informative, and the extras are bountiful. Available exclusively from shop.tcm.com.



'The Tell-Tale Heart' (1954)



'Gerald McBoing-Boing' (1951)

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1973, the source is Marseilles, and Furie's film borrows as heavily from *The French Connection* as it does from *Get Carter*, *The Godfather* and other near contemporary crime-movie hits, lining up no fewer than nine French bigwigs and millionaires responsible for the flow of scag on to American streets. Quickly, though, the clichés and tropes of all things 'blax' are abandoned, with the film finding itself climbing the West Coast waterfront and mountain towns all the way to British Columbia and, eventually, France. The structure takes some getting used to, meticulously but very elliptically parallel-editing the drug kingpins' delivery process alongside Williams's collection of a reluctant and often blackmailed ad hoc task force of avenging angels, including widowed mechanic Richard Pryor, junkie Gwen Welles and old Jewish couple-cum-retired-assassins Janet Brandt and Sid Melton.

Procedurally fanning out to limn some 16 characters on both sides (with crude ambience to spare, as with Malka Ribowska's randy restaurateur/dyke), Furie's movie is framed like a conspiracy thriller, with lots of narrative leaps, culminating with an echo of the ending movement of *The Godfather* (entailing, among other assassination scenarios, a hit in a French theatre showing *The Godfather*). But along the way there's enough character quirk to pack two movies, and a startlingly nasty car chase on the northwestern suburban roadways that's shot with low-tech textbook precision (Furie's backseat swivel panic is still underutilised in such sequences). Williams is a dull enough lead; the highlight cast-wise is Pryor, and the film provides us with another badly needed portrait of him as a young comic/actor, effortlessly stealing every scene with simply the disbelieving steadiness of his gaze.

Disc: Adequate; some scenes are noticeably grainier and less contrasty than others. Supplement-free. (MA)

I.D.

Philip Davis; UK 1995; Anchor Bay/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD; Certificate 15; 103 minutes; Aspect Ratio 16:9

Film: It's an occupational hazard with films about football hooliganism (as with gangster movies) that the hoodlums are invariably much more compelling than the authority figures trying to pull them into line. In *I.D.*, the police officers who go undercover with Shadwell Town FC quickly become intoxicated with the boozing, camaraderie and adrenaline of life among the thugs. Reece Dinsdale may not have a reputation to match that of Gary Oldman, but his livewire performance here as John, the cop who relishes his newfound existence scrapping with Wapping FC fans on the terraces, matches that of Oldman's white-collar thug in Alan Clarke's *The Firm*. (The film also has a topical resonance, given the recent case of real-life undercover agent Mark Kennedy, who went 'rogue' with the environmentalist group he was infiltrating.) One difference between



Words for Battle Readings of British poetry are played over imagery of rural England and RAF pilots. The subtext is clear: the Brits are ready for war

I.D. and other films (*Green Street*, *The Football Factory*, *Ultra* etc etc) in this mini-genre is that the thugs actually seem to like the football rather than seeing it as just a pretext for fighting. "I don't give a fuck what no one says, this is living!" John exclaims en route to a match – and another scrap. The film can't help but endorse his point of view, even as his behaviour becomes ever more repugnant and animalistic.

Davis makes excellent use of his East London locations and – in spite of the film's moralistic ending – keeps the sociological sermonising to a minimum. There are some very vivid character turns from the likes of Warren Clarke as a tattoo-covered pub owner with a face like a bulldog and Sean Pertwee as Martin, the young thug who's initially suspicious of John but becomes his closest friend.

Disc: Anchor Bay's disc comes without extras. (GM)

The Complete Humphrey Jennings Volume Two: Fires Were Started

The Heart of Britain/Words for Battle/Listen to Britain/Fires Were Started/The Silent Village

UK 1941/41/41/43/43; BFI/Region 2 Blu-ray and DVD Dual Format; Certificate E; 9/8/20/65/36 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: 'This Is England' (alternative cut of 'The Heart of Britain'), 'I Was a Fireman' (original cut of 'Fires Were Started'), 40-page booklet

Films: Seventy years after they were made, Humphrey Jennings's wartime films can't help but invite comparison with George Orwell's famous essay *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius*. Orwell's description of "the clatter of clogs in the Lancashire mill towns, the to and fro of lorries on the Great

North Road... the rattle of pin-tables in Soho pubs" anticipates *Listen to Britain*. Jennings likewise offers an idealised snapshot of the British by capturing on film the sights and sounds of everything from dancehalls to factories, from Flanagan and Allen singing 'Underneath the Arches' to pianist Myra Hess performing Beethoven. The crowds affectionately (if slightly patronisingly) described by Orwell "with their mild knobby faces, their bad teeth and gentle manners" are also seen in these films. *Fires Were Started*, for example, is full of heroic, self-deprecating and very English characters, and the pathos of the film lies in the matter-of-fact way they deal with the apocalyptic events going on around them. The ingenious 'performances' from real-life firemen and forewomen may be clumsy in parts but they never seem contrived.

As Orwell noted, and Jennings implicitly acknowledges, "England is the most class-ridden country under the sun," and these class divisions are

Foul play: Reece Dinsdale in 'I.D.'



as pronounced as ever in wartime (the films in this collection show everything from pub culture to royalty listening to classical music), though they are – at least momentarily – transcended as people come together to resist the common foe. There is a wonderful moment in *The Heart of Britain* that defies you to laugh at it, as a well-spoken middle-class matron with just a hint of Penelope Keith about her talks of making cups of tea for survivors of the bombing of Coventry: "You know, you feel such fools, standing there in a crater in pitch darkness, holding mugs of tea for the men bringing out bodies. You feel useless, until you know there is somebody actually there in that bombed house who you can give that tea to... and then to hear the praises of the men themselves – 'That tea is jolly good. I've just washed the blood and dust out of my mouth.'"

In *Words for Battle*, Laurence Olivier's tremulous readings of snippets of British poetry are played over imagery of rural England and RAF pilots.

The subtext is clear: the Brits have been roused to anger by their Nazi antagonists and are now ready for war.

Of course, there is much more to Jennings's wartime films than celebrating the quiet dignity and heroism of the Brits at war. He always has an eye for both lyrical and incongruous images, and an extraordinary facility for filming landscape (whether bomb-scarred London or rolling meadows) and for homing in on the telling or jarring detail, such as a kid in a playground, a father teaching his son how to box, or a man in a cloth cap, standing in a doorway playing a pipe.

Discs: Issued on both Blu-ray and DVD, this dual-format edition comes with plentiful extras including Jennings's original cut of *Fires Were Started*. The 40-page booklet combines new essays with Lindsay Anderson's famous *Sight & Sound* article on Jennings, 'Only Connect', from 1954. The films here have been remastered using the best available elements but, even so, on *Fires Were Started* in particular there is a surprising amount of dirt and scratches. (Strangely, the same footage used in *I Was a Fireman*, Jennings's original cut of the film, seems considerably cleaner.) (GM)

The Living Wake

Sol Tryon; US 2007; Axiom Films/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 12; 88 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.78:1 anamorphic; Features: audio commentary with Jesse Eisenberg, Sol Tryon and cinematographer Scott Miller, and also with actor/co-writer Mike O'Connell and co-writer Peter Kline, short film 'The Re-Education of Mills Joquin', 'Musings with K. Roth Binew', featurettes, deleted scenes

Film: Original as hell but – for anyone without a pronounced taste for quaint absurdist comedy – faintly irritating with it, Sol Tryon's film adaptation stretches Mike O'Connell's

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one-man show further than it can comfortably go. Following his dandyish, deluded hero K. Roth Binew on his last day on earth, through declamatory bouts of gerontophilia, goat sacrifice and a whimsical farewell vaudeville show, it finds its gags (a "brief but powerful monologue" from his late father is perpetually out of reach) running out of steam some time before the archly mannered narrative does. However, Jesse Eisenberg, as straightfaced as O'Connell is determinedly manic, is curiously amusing as grieving sidekick Mills Joquin, especially when helping Binew smuggle his self-penned books past an intractable librarian in a last-ditch bid for immortality.

Disc: Cinematographer Scott Miller's rich, woody palette buffs up beautifully in the transfer. Copious bursts of Binewism in the extras will delight hardcore fans, though having two audio commentaries is probably overdoing it. (KS)

Films by Pier Paolo Pasolini

Accattone

1961 Italy; Eureka/Masters of Cinema/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD
Dual Format; Certificate 15; 116 minutes;
Aspect Ratio 1.37:1/1.66:1; Features:
Tony Rayns commentary, Pasolini's
1965 documentary 'Love Meetings',
trailers, booklet including Pasolini
essays and interview

The Gospel According to Matthew

1964 Italy/France; Eureka/Masters of
Cinema/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2
DVD Dual Format; Certificate U; 137
minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1/1.37:1;
Features: Pasolini's 1965 documentary
'Sopralluoghi in Palestina', newsreel,
outtakes, booklet

Films: These new Blu-ray transfers (also on DVD) see two key early Pasolini titles looking about as pristine as they did when they left the lab nearly five decades ago. For the viewer, though, watching the films fresh takes an act of will, since the controversial Italian is a director who brings certain baggage with him. Even those coming to Pasolini's cinema for the very first time will doubtless have some dim awareness of his Marxist political roots and gay sexuality filtering what they're seeing. Best surely to forget all that and simply respond to what's on screen – *Accattone*'s half-starved, work-shy Roman layabouts wrestling in the dust to the strains of Bach's St Matthew Passion, or Christ appearing for baptism at the riverside while a Congolese mass blazes away on the soundtrack in *The Gospel According to Matthew*.

Here are two remarkable offerings that lock together in perfect symmetry: *Accattone*'s street-tough drama celebrates the mythic manifest within the everyday, while *The Gospel According to Matthew* locates an authentically human experience within the Christian myth in order to reassert and renew its potency as ideological rather than religious. The current issue moreover corrects the mistitling that has previously been the film's lot in

Anglophone territories. Significantly there's no Saint Matthew here, just down-to-earth plain Matthew.

For all the grungy surroundings in *Accattone*, or the near-documentary feel as Christ's ministry unfolds, these works mark a major advance on the neorealists of the previous Italian generation, since what's striking is how they manage to seem so earthly grounded, yet by way of Pasolini's distinctive formal language (and his unprecedented, jarringly expressive use of music, from baroque to the blues) proclaim themselves very evident constructs with a firmly anti-authoritarian agenda. Time has perhaps softened their radical edge a little, since *Accattone*'s non-judgemental approach to the misadventures of its eponymous lower-class ne'er-do-well – unforgettably embodied by Franco Citti, heading a largely non-professional cast – now appears rather more commonplace than it once did, although the very idea that an avowed atheist could tackle the New Testament still startles. Indeed, that Pasolini's vision of the Gospel should refuse to be overawed by centuries of western art on the same subject, and also bring a fervent political dimension to revivify a story and a message dulled by familiarity, should leave most viewers open-mouthed in wonder.

Discs: The excellent Blu-ray transfers from restored prints are treasure enough, but the thoughtful and generous extras prove an education

in themselves. The Tony Rayns commentary on *Accattone* is authoritative and engaging, while the disc's bonus Pasolini documentary *Love Meeting*, investigating red-blooded Italian sexual attitudes circa 1965, certainly puts the main feature's underlying homoeroticism in context. Similarly, the additional Pasolini featurette on the *Gospel* disc shows how his scouting trip to Israel proved crucial in focusing his aesthetic approach to the subsequent magnum opus he would eventually shoot on Italian locations. (TJ)

The Portuguese Nun

Eugène Green; Portugal 2009; Artificial
Eye/Region 2 DVD; 122 minutes;
Aspect Ratio 16:9

Film: The fourth feature from novelist, poet and filmmaker Eugène Green, *The Portuguese Nun* is only the first of his films to be released on DVD in the UK, although Artificial Eye has acquired rights to the first three films as well and plans to release them later this year – a cause for some celebration. Green's instantly recognisable style, with its restrained declamatory acting and full-frontal close-ups, has proved divisive in his native France and is probably the main reason his work has been overlooked here until now.

Right from its mesmerising opening sequences, Green establishes *The Portuguese Nun* as a love letter to Lisbon, where protagonist Julie (Leonor

Baldaque), a young half-French, half-Portuguese actress, has just arrived to act in a film about a local nun who was seduced and abandoned by a French officer in the 17th century; the story is based on the letters she wrote to him. As Julie roams Lisbon's atmospheric cobbled streets, the languid pace and the sparse but lyrical dialogue emulate the cadence that characterises the *saudades* – the longing at the heart of Portuguese *fado*, which is itself as much a protagonist in Green's film as the city or Julie herself. After a series of encounters with fellow lost souls, it is in the act of learning to love others selflessly that Julie ultimately recognises her destiny and finds a purpose in life. Green's uncannily moving capacity to invoke the sublime in the everyday, albeit with an earthy, deadpan sense of humour, will haunt you for days afterwards.

Disc: The transfer is pristine and manages to retain the full brilliance of regular Green cinematographer Raphaël O'Byrne's ravishing use of Lisbon's celebrated light and Green's trademark candlelit interiors. Given that Green remains relatively unknown in the UK, it's a shame that no contextualising extras have been included. (MDD)

Ruggles of Red Gap

Leo McCarey, USA 1935; Eureka/Masters of Cinema/Dual Format Region 2 DVD & Region B Blu-ray; 91 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1; Certificate U; Features: filmed interview with Laughton's biographer Simon Callow, radio adaptations, booklet

Film: The second of two releases starring Charles Laughton to come out of the Masters of Cinema stable this month (alongside *The Island of Lost Souls*, reviewed on page 84), Leo McCarey's irresistibly warm, frequently hilarious 1935 film is another showcase for what Simon Callow, interviewed for this disc's extras, identifies as Laughton's singular ability to find the core of what in other hands could be a thin, one-dimensional character, and bring him brilliantly and vividly to life. Here Laughton plays Marmaduke Ruggles, the latest in a long line of Ruggleses to have served as butler to the aristocratic Burnsteads. When the current Earl of Burnstead loses a card game to new money American couple the Flouds, in Paris on vacation, he pays them off by handing them Ruggles's services, much to the prim butler's displeasure, which teeters on despair when the Flouds decide to take him to their small hometown of Red Gap in the US. But McCarey's film is ultimately an unashamed piece of American patriotism, and Ruggles softens as he comes to see what he might make of himself in the land of opportunity, a reversal crowned when he impeccably recites the Gettysburg Address to a bar full of spellbound drinkers. Laughton's performance is hugely charming throughout (not least in a magnificently played drunken scene), but McCarey also coaxes great turns from his characterful supporting players; it's the film's generous feel for this gallery of American eccentrics that



The Gospel According to Matthew
Pier Paolo Pasolini's remarkable film
locates an authentically human
experience within the Christian myth

ensures the film isn't gratingly patriotic, but is instead an endearing celebration. **Disc:** The film looks fine on Blu-ray, and Callow's insightful interview gives useful contextual information. (JB)

Tales from the Golden Age

Cristian Mungiu/Ioana Maria Uricaru/
Hanno Höfer/Razvan Marculescu/
Constantin Popescu; Romania 2009;
Zeitgeist/Region 1 NTSC DVD; 141
minutes; Aspect Ratio 16:9

Film: As dire as the costs may have been, there's no underestimating the wealth of tragic-absurdist-comic material provided by the decades of communist dictatorship – then and now the outrageous machinations of the Eastern European states seemed like a manifest work of satire, a walking-talking metaphor for the intrinsic lunacy of human life and social power. Can one imagine 20th-century culture, or the history of movies, without it?

This impish, bemused Romanian omnibus epic focuses on a particular slant of the Ceausescu years – the 'urban legends' that proliferated during the propaganda-mandated 'golden age' of the 1970s and 1980s, mostly hilarious and unofficial tales of totalitarian ritual and enforcement gone beautifully, absurdly haywire. Omnibuses can be unpredictable and of variable resonance episode to episode, but the ideological purity of this collection – engineered by sole writer and co-producer Cristian Mungiu – rescues it from the genre's scattershot tendencies. Consider this the Eastern European *Paris vu par...*

The sole filmmaker of stature in the group, Mungiu apparently devised the project to give the four other directors, whose credits had all been restricted to shorts, a shot at an international audience (who directed which episode isn't specified). The result is a beguiling and sun-soaked dalliance in the rosier fields of an autocratic nightmare, beginning with a deft and razor-sharp portrait of a village attempting to prepare for an 'official visit' and getting instead hung up on an endless carnival ride, and ending with the ultra-deadpan saga of a chicken driver in love with a roadhouse proprietor and suddenly flush with a bounty of accidental eggs. (Food is always an issue here: one of the stories involves an attempt to humanely and silently kill a gift pig in a tiny Bucharest apartment.) Some chunks are more pointed, and funnier, than others, but the confidence and wit of the filmmaking are quintessentially Romanian.

Disc: Clean transfer, no extras. (MA)

This month's releases reviewed by Sergio Angelini, Michael Atkinson, James Bell, Michael Brooke, Mar Diestro-Dórido, Trevor Johnston, Geoffrey Macnab, Kim Newman, Nick Pinkerton, Kate Stables and David Thompson



Braquo The malodorous, corrupt, tobacco-stained, crime-infested Paris presented here is basically a war zone, ready to explode at any moment

Braquo – Series 1

Capa Drama/Be-FILMS/Canal+;
France 2009; Arrow/Region 2 DVD;
377 minutes; Certificate 18;
Aspect Ratio 16:9

Programme: Escalation is the watchword for those on either side of the thin blue line in this penumbral *policier* by cop-turned-filmmaker Olivier Marchal. It opens with the chilling interview of a man, handcuffed and stripped to his underpants, accused of rape and murder. The inspector becomes so angry at the suspect's refusal to confess that he assaults him with a biro and blinds him in one eye. His squad, led now by Eddy (Jean-Hugues Anglade), rally round and try to get their boss out of trouble, but their attempted intimidation of the suspect concludes in his murder and the suicide of their superior – and then the bodies really start to pile up.

The malodorous, corrupt, tobacco-stained and crime-infested Paris presented here is basically a war zone ready to explode at any moment, a depiction made explicit late in the series when the rescue from gangsters of gentle giant Walter (Joseph Malerba) is handled as a coolly disciplined military operation in which the police execute his captors one by one. Eddy's real concern is not catching criminals but rather the survival of a team being pulled apart by an internal-affairs investigation – a real threat that's exacerbated by the recklessness of cokehead sybarite Théo (Nicolas Duvauchelle) and the increasing disillusionment of

soulful second-generation copper Roxane (Karole Rocher).

The show (the title is a slang expression taken from *braquage*, meaning a hold-up or heist) has much in common with the equally amoral police drama *The Shield*. As with its transatlantic counterpart, no matter how many people Eddy and his team blackmail, kidnap, torture and execute, the villains always contrive to do even worse. Moreover, the team, like their American cousins, are sentimental about children, family and babies in particular. If this fails to convince us that the protagonists remain somehow on the side of the angels, it takes nothing away from the sheer kinetic wallop the show delivers as its characters spiral relentlessly down the plughole. Unmissable.

Discs: The subtitles are generally good though occasionally prone to instances of inter-language collision ("He looks like he's been through a compression roller"). (SA)

The Golden Bowl

BBC; UK 1972; Acorn Media/Region 2 DVD; 258 minutes; Certificate PG; Aspect Ratio 4:3; Features: picture gallery, text biographies

Programme: Narration is privileged and centralised in this striking adaptation of Henry James's late masterpiece by Jack Pulman. To retain the author's original voice, a near-omniscient narrator is constructed in the shape of Bob Assingham (played by Cyril Cusack), the husband of the meddling Fanny

(Kathleen Byron). This proves a highly appropriate device for a story that deals in the subtle manipulation of characters through the indirect creation of narratives. Daniel Massey and Gayle Hunnicutt are the ex-lovers who are manoeuvred back into each other's arms by their respective spouses, a father and daughter (Barry Morse and Jill Townsend) whose devotion to each other initially blinds them to their actions. The rise and fall of the six characters' emotional equilibrium, delivered in extraordinary verbal detail, is certainly rarefied but never less than compelling. Made almost entirely on tape in the studio, this atmospheric rendering stands up remarkably well some 40 years after its original broadcast.

Discs: This video production has been transferred impeccably. Extras are negligible. (SA)

Murder Rooms

The Television Production Company/
WGBH Boston/BBC; UK 2000-01;
Icon Home Entertainment/Region 4;
375 minutes; Aspect Ratio 16:9

Programme: David Pirie was already the author of *A Heritage of Horror*, an influential study of Hammer Films and the gothic tradition, when he made his stunning screenwriting debut with *Rainy Day Women* (1984), which initiated a continuing series of television dramas noted for their artful combinations of flashback with real and imagined history to explore the crisis in traditional concepts of masculinity. It also introduced a recurring motif – the hero's race to rescue a damsel in distress which ultimately ends in tragic failure – that has remained a constant.

All these elements are present and correct in the two-part film *Murder Rooms: The Dark Beginnings of Sherlock Holmes*, in which Arthur Conan Doyle recollects his mentoring in the ways of forensic detection by Dr Joseph Bell (superbly played, without an ounce of flounce, by Ian Richardson, himself a former TV Sherlock). This smart and atmospheric bit of metafiction served as a pilot for a series of four 90-minute stories that included nods to several of Doyle's celebrated novels and stories (including 'The Lost World' and 'The Speckled Band'). Inevitably, like previous onscreen examples of recursive narrative devoted to such mystery writers as Agatha Christie, Dashiell Hammett and Edgar Allan Poe, it runs the risk of downgrading the creative abilities of the original author by offering real-life equivalents. However, such considerations don't get in the way of these superbly crafted horror-tinged tales, which are well above average for excursions into television Victorianism.

Disc: This Australian DVD set is a considerable improvement on the technically inferior British releases, offering sharp anamorphic transfers with strong colours. No extras. (SA)

Within these walls

Henry K. Miller *welcomes*
the first full-length history
of the BFI in over 40 years

The British Film Institute, the Government and Film Culture, 1933-2000

Edited by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith
and Christophe Dupin, Manchester
University Press, 348pp, £65,
ISBN 9780719079085

"Amazingly," as Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Christophe Dupin write in their introduction, "this dramatic story has never been told before." Founded in 1933, the body that became this magazine's publisher and established what is now the world's largest moving-image archive will have affected the cinematic life of – as they put it – "anybody in Britain whose interest in the cinema extends beyond what's on at the local multiplex". Yet the last full-length history of the British Film Institute, Ivan Butler's 'To Encourage the Art of the Film', was published in 1971, while Nowell-Smith and Dupin – the new book's principal authors as well as editors – had to come to terms with the irony that an organisation responsible for irreplaceable holdings in virtually every medium imaginable had let its own records go mouldy.

Naturally, this book is of special interest to anybody associated with this magazine. But unlike Butler's book, this is not an official history. Though initiated by the BFI, the research was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and conducted in what Nowell-Smith – a fairly staunch critic of the institute over the last two decades – describes as the "more propitious intellectual environment" of Queen Mary, University of London. He has provided the broad history; Dupin and a handful of others contribute chapters on more particular aspects of the BFI's work.

The BFI was the product of a sham marriage of incompatible trade and educational interests; this book's thesis is that it became a bastion of film culture (the term itself came later) only in the 1950s, under the direction of Denis Forman, who revitalised Sight & Sound, set up the National Film Theatre and oversaw the production scheme which begat Free Cinema (each of which gets a chapter). Nowell-Smith presents the BFI's reconstruction as part of the social-democratic current that produced the Beveridge and Butler Reports, the Arts and Design Councils, and the Central Office of Information (whence came Forman), while Richard MacDonald's chapter on the institute's on-off relationship with the film-society movement takes in the role of the Army Bureau of Current Affairs, an important



For the nation: the BFI's role in film preservation evolved only gradually; below, chief archivist Ernest Lindgren

factor in Labour's 1945 election victory.

The institute's détournement of its official purposes is a recurring theme. S&S started out as "a quarterly review of modern aids to learning". The first NFT was a temporary building erected for the 1951 Festival of Britain. The National Film Library (NFL), the forerunner of today's BFI National Archive, was conceived as a mechanism by which trade interests might absorb and neuter the GPO Film Unit, with next to no concern for preserving feature films. It is a symptom of the neglect the editors describe that

**Lindgren remains
obscure, while his
Parisian counterpart
Henri Langlois is a
near-mythical figure**



Ernest Lindgren, chief archivist from the NFL's inception in 1935 till his last months in 1973, remains obscure, while his Parisian counterpart Henri Langlois, co-founder of the Cinémathèque Française, is a near-mythical figure. Dupin's chapter on their extraordinary relationship is genuinely riveting.

As Nowell-Smith writes, the Forman era, during which S&S and the NFT together greatly expanded the institute's membership and stature, "laid down the template for what the BFI was to become for the next fifty years" – albeit on a meagre budget which restricted its reach, by and large, to a "mainly metropolitan, 'art film' public", and subject to seemingly endless reorganisations, particularly in the last two decades. The Wilson government delivered more money, in part for a regional expansion programme, but mismanagement, combined with the agitation of a groupuscule of disaffected staff and members, brought the institute to the point of crisis in the early 1970s. The "crux of the dispute" – also the crux of this book – was the novel idea of film culture.

The 70s radicals thought that the BFI, once divested of S&S and other allegedly commercial operations, should be converted into a museum-cum-university "responsible primarily to its members", charged with "promoting a film culture". Lindgren, by then among the old guard, refused to acknowledge the term – despite, as Nowell-Smith says, the institute's role in creating it. What were

in question were whom and how far the BFI was meant to serve, whom and how far to lead. The radicals, who deemed the BFI's approach "a narrow one, centred on a concept of film as art", conceived of film culture as a process of education of a certain kind; Lindgren, a little disingenuously, reckoned the institute's role was "to provide the information and the facilities to enable people to make up their own minds".

The question resounds today. Nowell-Smith's treatment of it rests too heavily on the metaphor of the cultural "cutting edge" on which the BFI ought to locate itself – who decides where it's at? Might there be more than one? There is an implicit valuation in his opposition of "the vital forces emerging in the film culture" – with which he tends to side – to an institute devoted, in the dissidents' view, to "giving middlebrow provincial audiences access to the reach-me-downs of art film culture"; this valuation needs to be made explicit. Anthony Smith, whose directorship in the 1980s led to what Nowell-Smith calls "the zenith of the BFI's public standing and successful outreach", is quoted as saying that "our primary public is the whole public".

Though it extols "the glory days of the 1970s" when the radicals joined the institute and put the journal Screen at the vanguard of film education, this book has quite traditional virtues of clarity and empirical density, out of fashion back then, doing for the BFI what Rachael Low's 'History of the British Film' did for the industry as a whole.

BFI STILL LIFE POSTERS AND DESIGNS (2)

FURTHER READING

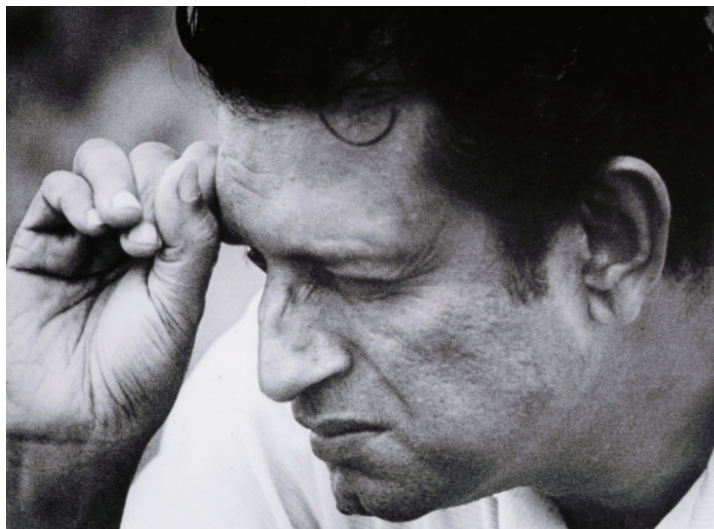
Deep Focus: Reflections on Cinema

By Satyajit Ray, HarperCollins India, 171pp, Rs 450, ISBN 9789350291351

In tandem with his filmmaking career, Satyajit Ray (1921-92) was also a writer. His fiction in Bengali was commercially successful, especially a series of novellas about an Indian detective duo loosely based on Holmes and Watson, two of which he adapted into films (*The Golden Fortress*, 1974, and *The Elephant God*, 1978). His occasional articles in both Bengali and English on the art and craft of cinema are among the most articulate, unpretentious and enjoyable written by any film director – on a par with the autobiography of his friend and admirer Kurosawa.

One of the best of these articles – ‘A Long Time on the Little Road’, about the trials and tribulations of making *Pather Panchali* (1955) – appeared in *Sight & Sound* in 1957 and was reprinted, along with two dozen others, in a 1976 collection of Ray’s writings, *Our Films Their Films*. Another, ‘Under Western Eyes’ – possibly Ray’s finest article ever, about distorted European and American perceptions of Indian culture, including Indian cinema – appeared in *S&S* in 1982. It’s collected for the first time in *Deep Focus*, which brings together most of Ray’s remaining English articles under the editorship of his son Sandip Ray (also a filmmaker), with a foreword by the director Shyam Benegal.

Many of these articles were buried in Indian newspapers, magazines and journals, and it’s good to see them disinterred. The book’s additional attractions include stills from the films, plus some of Ray’s own photographs, film posters created by the director,



“A scorn for mediocrity”: Satyajit Ray was an acute commentator on the craft of film

witty caricatures from his pen – and a few striking photos of Ray at work by the documentary filmmaker B.D. Garga. There are, however, two puzzling omissions: ‘My Life, My Work’, a five-part lecture Ray gave in 1982, and ‘Ordeals of the Alien’, his sardonic account of the fate of his celebrated science-fiction screenplay in Hollywood in the late 1960s.

The 22 pieces range in length from the substantial to the slight, and in subject from the craft of filmmaking to the dubious pleasures of sitting on a Soviet film-festival jury; there are also personal responses to fellow directors such as Chaplin (with a wonderful sketch by Ray), Godard and Bergman

(with a thoughtful photo-portrait by Ray). Every piece, however short, offers rewards. Many are deliciously ironic, somewhat in the manner of Ray’s film *Days and Nights in the Forest* (1970).

My own favourites (apart from ‘Under Western Eyes’) are a wistful piece from 1980 about the vanished silent cinema heritage of Bengal, and a trenchant lecture given at India’s first film school in Pune in 1974. The former begins with a childhood memory of a Calcutta uncle who took the nine-year-old Ray to see the first Johnny Weissmuller Tarzan film. All the seats were taken, so the dismayed nephew was taken instead to a Bengali silent, *The Doomed Marriage* (*Kaal Parinaya*,

1930) – which unfortunately turned out to be an “early example of Indian soft porn”, as an amused Ray writes. “The hero and the heroine – or was it the Vamp? – newly married, were in bed, and a close-up showed the woman’s leg rubbing against the man’s.” The young Satyajit, curious and precociously dedicated to the cinema, greeted his uncle’s urgent and periodic “let’s go home” with “stony silence”.

Regarding India’s massive popular cinema – whether made in Bombay, Calcutta or Madras – Ray in his Pune Institute lecture comments bluntly that “in our country at least, films have been made with virtually no contribution from the director, or at least nothing of a positive nature. He does nothing because he knows nothing.” Ray then advises the aspiring filmmakers: “If you are truly gifted, you will sooner or later create your own market. If not, and you still want to stay in business, the only rules you would have to follow would be the rules of compromise.”

Ray was certainly contemptuous of most of Indian popular cinema, apart from some of the innovative songs – too contemptuous, thinks Benegal, who comments that Ray’s attitude was “somewhat elitist”. As Ray’s biographer, I often encountered hostility to him among Indian filmmakers, which persists even two decades after his death. Yet – as the intelligence, subtlety and cosmopolitanism on display in *Deep Focus* demonstrate – without such a scorn for crowd-pleasing mediocrity, *Pather Panchali* and Ray’s other masterpieces of world cinema could never have come into existence.

◆◆ Andrew Robinson

New Argentine Cinema

By Jens Andermann, I.B.Tauris, 232pp, £16.99, ISBN 9781848854635

According to Cannes Festival Director Thierry Frémaux, the New Argentine Cinema (NAC), which once promised so much, ultimately ‘committed suicide’ by making films destined only for the festival circuit. But you would be hard pushed to gauge this demise from Jens Andermann’s engaging study of the varied highs of Argentine filmmaking over the past two decades.

Andermann knows he has a tough task. The opening page quotes Gonzalo Aguilar and Joanna Page, authors of two acclaimed earlier studies of the crop of independent filmmakers preoccupied “with the national present as a time of crisis, often encountered through neo-realist chronicles of the social and geographical margins”. Whereas Aguilar offered a broad overview of the NAC and its genesis, and Page opted to position these films within the context of a neoliberal economy that imploded in 2001, Andermann provides a discussion that celebrates the multiple achievements of NAC within a broader

filmmaking landscape, encompassing the more commercial products of Juan José Campanella (*The Secret in Their Eyes*), activist film and video, and the political allegories of Fernando Solanas (*The Hour of the Furnaces*) – whose model was decisively rejected by the nimble NAC generation.

Although there are treatments here of favoured works by directors such as Raúl Perrone, Martín Rejtman, Pablo Trapero, Lisandro Alonso and Lucrecia Martel, Andermann largely eschews an auteurist approach. Instead he focuses on how the directorial brand is fabricated – with attention paid to the role of editors (including Alejo Moguillansky and Nicolás Goldbart) in shaping the NAC style. Chapters on the politically charged landscapes (both urban and rural) of the films are balanced by treatments of styles of performance – from the experience paraded by Luis Margani’s Rulo in Trapero’s *Crane World* (1999) to Ricardo Darín’s edgy performative invocation of masculinity under siege in a range of films from *Nine Queens* (2000) to *Carancho* (2010).



“Edgy invocation of masculinity”: Ricardo Darín in ‘Carancho’

Andermann is ambitious in his scope, finding room for discussions of popular religiosity as a form of historical experience, musical performance in a medium where the sonic frequently plays second fiddle to the visual, and narrative models where shared spaces are threatened by an antagonistic exterior force. *New Argentine Cinema*

doesn’t purport to provide an overview of the New Argentine Cinema – that’s Aguilar’s terrain – but it does contextualise the works that slipped into this slippery critical category within a broader (and arguably less festival-friendly) culture of national film production, criticism and distribution. ◆◆ Maria M. Delgado

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Digital dilemma

Now that cinema is becoming increasingly digital, our local film club faces an issue that is beginning to cause us problems, namely the non-availability of many digital cinema package (DCP) copies of films beyond an initial period of between three and six months. Apparently many distributors are not keeping these for very long beyond the period of initial theatrical release. As a film society showing films in a local cinema, we need to book our films well in advance, in some cases significantly more than a year after DCP copies first become available. While 35mm alternatives remain available, the problem is perhaps less an issue, though digital copies usually show a film in a better light than an ageing 35mm print. But as 35mm goes into further decline, the problem will clearly become more serious. My understanding is that the downloads sent out to cinemas are wiped after just a few months so that fresh content can be downloaded on the hard drives. We can always (presumably) pay for a further download to be made – and we have done this in our current year – but this obviously incurs a further cost.

The answer seems simple: distributors keep at least one DCP copy available that can be sent out to cinemas at later dates. The cost to the distributor would surely be minimal. I do not know the legalities at play in this issue but our request (on behalf of cinema organisations that are finding this a worry) seems perfectly reasonable. Is anyone able to throw light on this? Has anyone else experienced this problem? Is there any need for a campaign?

Paul Hill

Programming secretary, Louth Film Club
By email

One that got away

The Lost and Found column is one of the month's highlights. Mark Le Fanu is right to single out René Clément's *Gervaise* (S&S, April), but in outlining reasons why the director has "never ridden high in the auteurist pantheon" he misses a perfect opportunity to highlight the loss of Clément's *This Angry Age* (aka *The Sea Wall*, 1958).

Lost property:
'This Angry Age'



LETTER OF THE MONTH

The age of reason

Yes, Mr Charles Gant, *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* did take me to the pictures instead of waiting for the DVD (The Numbers, S&S, May). I went with an age-appropriate friend, choosing the hypercinema instead of the local. Inside, nobody munched through vast cardboard boxes of popcorn, spraying rubbish over the floor. Just a few discreet Murray Mint papers crinkled. At the end, as the credits rolled, warm applause gave an impression of comfortable enjoyment.

But beware Mr Gant of "showing this audience respect". Credibility is also a vital element of successful storytelling. If 'ownership' tips into patronising – and *TBEMH* is perilously close – us grey heads may lose interest. By omitting any feel for the chronic poverty and denial central to Indian society – many of us donate some of our pensions to charities there – filmmakers run the risk of losing this demographic. Don't forget a life



experience which goes with being an older audience may have taken us to poorer countries like India or Africa and we will have seen it all first hand. Happy endings are fine, but not if we have to

stretch our disbelief too far. Oh, and I would prefer to be stereotyped as discerning rather than grey.

D. O'Dell (retired)

By email

This is the film the American auteurist Andrew Sarris refers to as one of the director's two best – and proof that, given an English-language production, Clément possessed the temperament to become an American director. Unfortunately the film – with extraordinary credentials (Silvana Mangano, Anthony Perkins, Alida Valli and Jo Van Fleet; music by Nino Rota; from a story by Marguerite Duras; colour camerawork by Otello Martelli) – has tragically not been seen at all since its first release.

Is there any chance that this loss may have weakened its director's case for a higher entry in the auteur pantheon?

Peter B. Herbert

Curator/manager, The Arts Project

Buy it here

While I enjoyed reading Vlastimir Sudar's piece on *Group Portrait with Lady* (Lost & Found, S&S, May), his claim that the film "is now completely unavailable" is slightly false. It has been released on DVD in both German and French editions (*Gruppenbild mit Dame/Portrait de groupe avec dame*) and can be purchased easily via Amazon from either country – although neither disc, sadly, appears to have English subtitles. The film is one more example of the parochial nature of film distribution in the UK.

David Melville Wingrove

Film lecturer, Edinburgh

The fog of 'War'

I hate to be cornered into defending *This Means War*, not least because it's a McG picture, but your review (S&S, April) can't be allowed to go unchallenged.

Vadim Rizov cites a scene in a London tailor's "that doesn't serve any evident purpose" about "a suit that's never seen".

Any complete viewing of the film would make clear that the purpose of the

scene is to enable the baddie Heinrich (Til Schweiger) to track down the good guys in Los Angeles, using a fragment of cloth. This is all clearly, not to say ploddingly, set up at the beginning of the film.

Andrew Cartmel

London

Accidental shooting

In response to Dr Darren Mulloy's letter (S&S, May), I cannot imagine a more misconceived companion for the mysterious world of the subconscious that David Lynch creates than the literal Christian symbolism of C.S. Lewis.

If Dr Mulloy had studied the genesis of the character Bob he would know that Mr Lynch himself has described this as a "perfect accident" when he saw Frank Silva on the set of *Twin Peaks*. Lynch has stated that he "didn't know what the hell" the character meant. The Man from Another Place was actually originally intended to feature in *Eraserhead*, where the "other place" is "in the radiator", not the woods. The character who appeared in *Twin Peaks* was realised as a result of Mr Lynch meeting Mike Anderson in 1987 while the latter was auditioning for *Ronnie Rocket*. In the context of *Fire Walk with Me*, the Man from Another Place isn't even a separate character to the man with one arm – he is the arm!

Lynch is steeped in a Zen/meditative tradition not a Christian one and for him "the other place" is the realm between the conscious world and the subconscious, the realm between knowing and the perfect unknowable.

Kieron Boote

Stockton Brook, Stoke-on-Trent

Fond memories of 'Hell'

I have fond memories of working on *Her Private Hell* (DVDs, S&S, May) and was somewhat surprised to find it released

as a DVD. Shot mainly on the stages at Isleworth Studios, the film was very tame by today's standards, it is true – maybe in part due to the lead actress's reluctance to reveal all each day when we reached the crucial scene. Her two hours in make-up each day became legendary and played havoc with the schedule.

The film did however encapsulate the social and sexual hypocrisies of the day, and these were played out off as well as on set. I remember one high-profile figure at the studio, well known for canoodling with his secretary on the stairs, one day bursting in and saying – in reference to some lascivious goings-on on a white fur rug – that he was "not going to have that sort of smut" in his studio.

I did not learn much from my first job in the industry apart from how to iron shirts, having been hired to watch over the costumes, but Les Young, the camera operator, went on to shoot many wonderful documentaries for *The South Bank Show*. Oh, and that "cod-Lichtenstein" hung in my hall for years!

Paul Hughes-Smith

Chiswick, London

Additions & corrections

May p.54 *Angel & Tony*, Certificate 15, 83m 22s, 7,503 ft +0 frames; p.56 *Being Elmo*, Certificate U, 76m 8s, 6,852 ft +0 frames; p.58 *Buck*, Certificate PG, 88m 44s, 7,986 ft +0 frames; p.59 *A Cat in Paris*, Certificate PG, 64m 46s, 8,892 ft +0 frames; p.63 *The Divide*, Certificate 18, 112m 13s, 10,099 ft +8 frames; p.64 *Gone*, Certificate 15, 94m 44s, 8,526 ft +0 frames; p.75 *Oliver Sherman*, Certificate 15, 82m 23s, 7,414 ft +8 frames; p.80 *Town of Rumors*, Certificate PG, 88m 58s, 8,007 ft +0 frames

April p.72 *Once upon a Time in Anatolia* in the synopsis, the final sentence, "He fakes evidence to suggest that Yasar was buried alive, so that presumed perpetrator Kenan will face lesser charges" is wrong. The sentence should read: "He chooses to omit from his report evidence suggesting Yasar was buried alive, so presumed perpetrator Kenan will face lesser charges."

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